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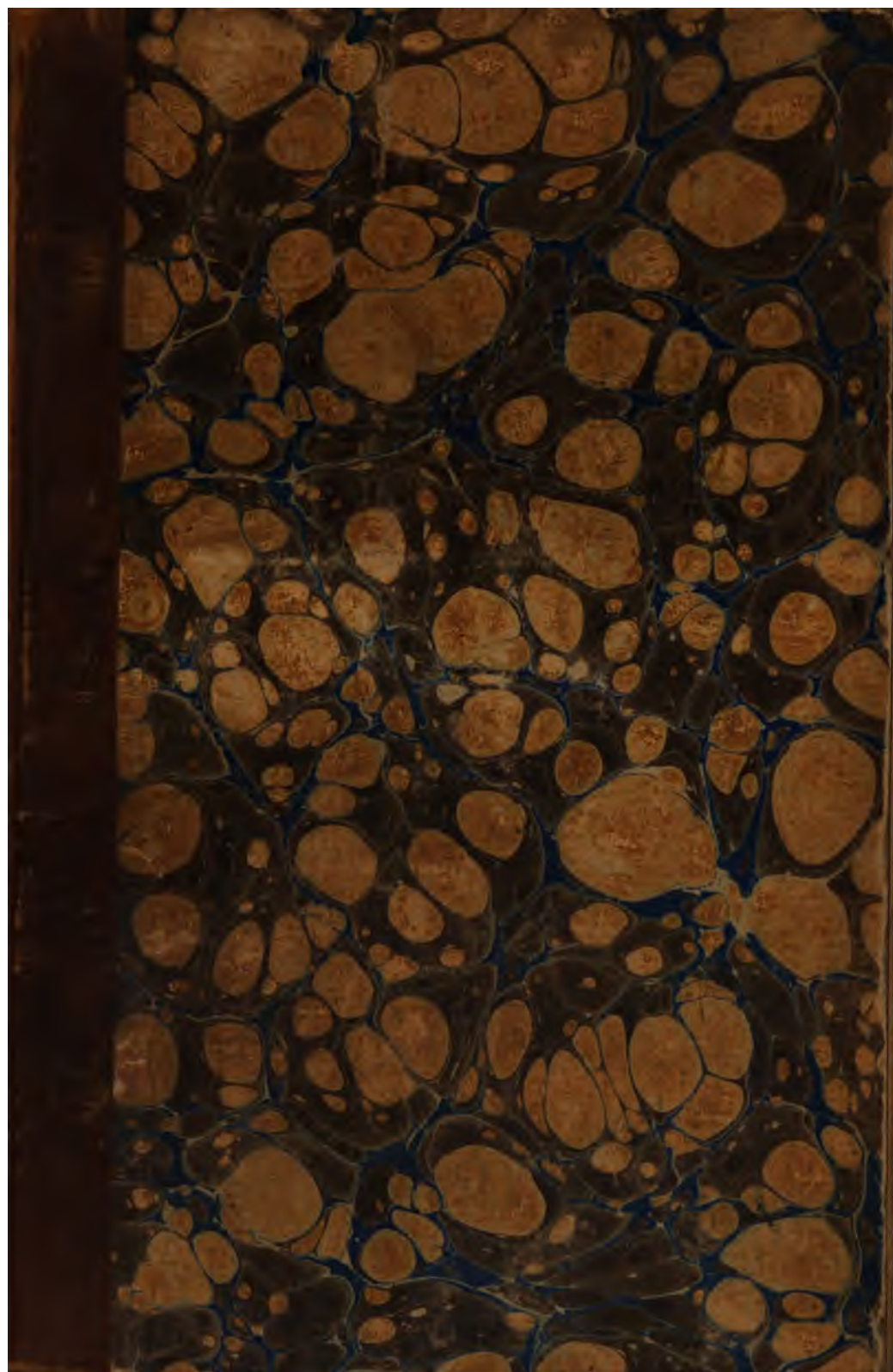
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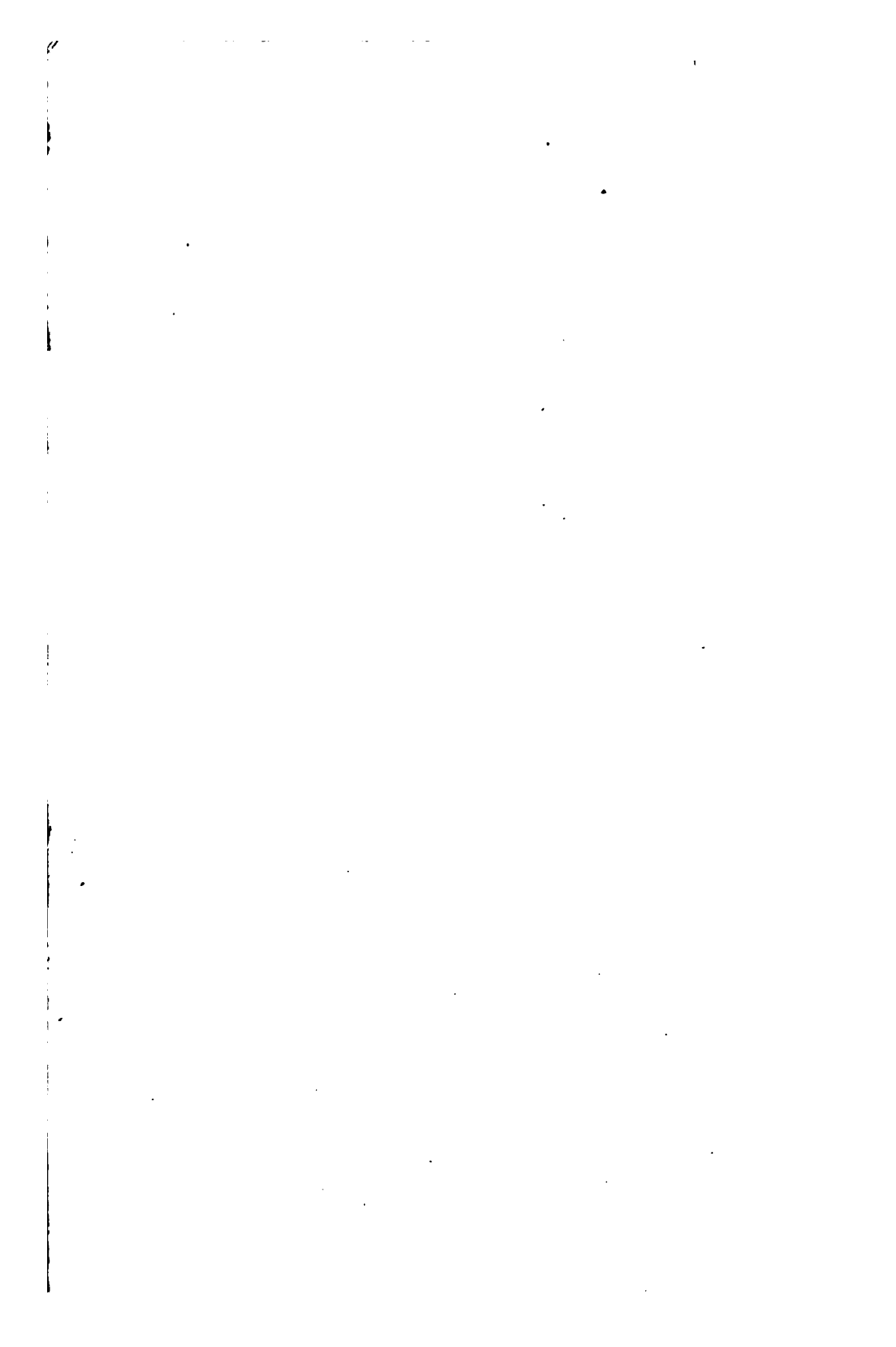


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OLD MAIDS:

A Comedy.



IN FIVE ACTS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

BY

JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

AUTHOR OF "VIRGINIUS," "THE HUNCHBACK," ETC.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON, DOVER STREET.

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LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

TO
ROBERT DICK, ESQ.,
OF
LOCH ARD LODGE, NEAR ABERFOYLE, BY STIRLING,
This Comedy
IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY DEDICATED,
BY
JAMES SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

CHARACTERS.

SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT	. . . . .	<i>Mr. C. Mathews.</i>
MASTER BLOUNT	. . . . .	<i>Mr. F. Matthews.</i>
JOHN BLOUNT	. . . . .	<i>Mr. Harley.</i>
THOMAS BLOUNT	. . . . .	<i>Mr. G. Vandenhoff.</i>
ROBERT	. . . . .	<i>Mr. W. Lacey.</i>
BERNARD	. . . . .	<i>Mr. Ayliff.</i>
HARRIS	. . . . .	<i>Mr. Honner.</i>
STEPHEN	. . . . .	<i>Mr. W. Payne.</i>
JACOB	. . . . .	<i>Mr. Wigan.</i>
WILLIAM	. . . . .	<i>Mr. Kerridge.</i>
LADY BLANCHE	. . . . .	<i>Madame Vestris.</i>
LADY ANNE	. . . . .	<i>Mrs. Nisbett.</i>
MISTRESS BLOUNT	. . . . .	<i>Mrs. W. West.</i>
CHARLOTTE	. . . . .	<i>Mrs. Humby.</i>
JANE	. . . . .	<i>Miss Lee.</i>

OLD MAIDS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Room in SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT's House.

Enter BERNARD and HARRIS.

HARRIS.

What time to-morrow ?

BERNARD.

At noon, I told thee, he sets off. Be thou forthcoming
an hour before at the latest ; and mind no item be wanting.
We lack leisure for mistakes.

HARRIS.

I shall be careful. How takes he this route to Ireland ?

BERNARD.

As he takes everything—with an even temper.

HARRIS.

He goes not there to sleep.

BERNARD.

No ; when he ought to be awake—but he will lose no
wink of rest that a proper man should profit by ; no more

than he will step aside to avoid watching, toil, or peril ; which he will share with the meanest soldier in his regiment. Sir Philip Brilliant is a butterfly in the drawing-room, but a man in the field. His nature is of the true stuff ! He is a blade of proof in a dainty scabbard ; you may laugh at the scabbard, but you won't at the blade.

HARRIS.

And takes he this expedition so coolly ?

BERNARD.

Coolly ?—Judge of the fever it throws him into, when I tell you he has been occupied this hour past in trying on a new suit, with which he means to affront all comparison to-day, for its fashion and splendour. Let us be gone. Here he comes.

HARRIS.

And with him Master Robert, his valet. What a pleasant incontinent rogue that Master Robert is !

BERNARD.

Ay, but a frank one, and honest withal—a rogue for the humour only.

HARRIS.

I will tell you a trick he played me.

BERNARD.

Nay ; if you begin with his tricks, there will never be an end.

HARRIS.

But I must tell thee.

BERNARD.

Well ; be it as we pass to the door, then. Quick ! They are here.

[BERNARD and HARRIS go out.]

Enter SIR PHILIP and ROBERT.

SIR PHILIP.

Now, Robert, for I know you have an eye,
Examine me. Scan me from head to foot
And round about, and say how fits my dress,
And as you love me, Robert, use your skill.
Lie the seams fair? Sits any part awry?
Observe the buttons, their due distances?
The slashes their proportions and their places?
The skirts their lengths and uniformity?
Lurks anywhere a wrinkle or a crease?
Find me a fault, dear Robert, if you can.

ROBERT.

The suit, methinks, is perfect.

SIR PHILIP.

Look again
And jealously! Find me a fault, I'll find
A crown for you.

ROBERT.

Sooner I'd miss the fault
Than get the crown.

SIR PHILIP.

I know thy honesty.
But find the fault although thou get'st the crown.

ROBERT.

What's that?

SIR PHILIP

What, Robert?

ROBERT.

If I may believe
My eyes—

SIR PHILIP.

Be sure thou mayst, if 'tis a fault
Thou think'st thou seest.

ROBERT.

'Tis a fault I see !

SIR PHILIP.

What is it ?

ROBERT.

Yet, perhaps, 'tis not a fault.

SIR PHILIP.

It must be one ! Thou'rt not inclined to see it,
And, therefore, doubt'st it ! What is it ?

ROBERT.

Alas !

It is a fault.

SIR PHILIP.

A great or little one?
Don't keep me in suspense ; I'm on the rack !
Well, Robert, well !

ROBERT.

It is a little fault ;
A very little fault—a wrinkle only
About an inch, a quarter, and a tenth
In length.

SIR PHILIP.

Were it the tenth without the rest
It spoils the suit—off with't ! It shall go back !

ROBERT.

It much becomes you ! Well the colour sorts
With your complexion !—and the pattern flogs
All past achievements of the shaping art !

And 'tis a dress of excellent proportions,
Sets off your person to unmatch'd advantage.
Look at the sleeve alone !—How plain it shows
The tailor tax'd his brains !

SIR PHILIP.

Where lies the wrinkle ?

ROBERT.

Here, near the seam of the left shoulder.

SIR PHILIP.

That's
A place a wrinkle may have leave to come !
Canst help the wrinkle ? There's the piece I promised
For finding it. If thou canst help it, now,
That piece will find a fellow.

ROBERT.

I will try.
I will not promise you I shall succeed.
Stand straight and still. Now, please you, raise your arm ;
Now put it down again—Upon my life
'Tis growing less.

SIR PHILIP.

Well done, good Robert.

ROBERT.

'Tis
Almost away !

SIR PHILIP.

Say it is quite away,
I'll give thee the third piece.

ROBERT.

I would I could ;
No hope of that, I fear ! A wrinkle is

A stubborn thing ! Eh ?—What ?—I must be blind !
Why, where is it ?

SIR PHILIP.

Is't gone ?

ROBERT.

I am bewitch'd !

Is aught the matter, think you, with my sight ?
Or that is gone, or else the wrinkle's gone ;
So gone, I swear I cannot find the place !
I can't believe there ever was a wrinkle !

SIR PHILIP.

Good Robert, there are the two crowns.

ROBERT.

Dear sir,
I don't deserve them.

SIR PHILIP.

Nay !—

ROBERT.

Indeed I don't.

SIR PHILIP.

I'll not believe thee.

ROBERT.

Nay, I swear I don't.
I must have fancied that there was a wrinkle.

SIR PHILIP.

Robert, a virtue may become a vice,
Carried too far ! Thou art too honest, Robert.

ROBERT.

Nay, hear me, sir !

SIR PHILIP.

I won't ! There was a wrinkle !

Did I not set me on my perfect poise ?
Stood I not motionless as block of stone ?
Then at thy bidding raised I not my arm,
And lower'd it again, while thou didst jerk
My skirts to take the wrinkle out ?—and now
Persuade me there was none ! There was a wrinkle !
I will not hear thee !—Peace ! So Lady Blanche
And Lady Anne were in the Park to-day !
How look'd fair Lady Blanche ?

ROBERT.

Oh, charmingly !
But her companion were the maid for me ;
I love her lip of scorn ! It dares a man !

SIR PHILIP.

That's shrewdly felt ! He were a man indeed
That carried her ! That man is yet to come !
She glories in her single state ; and train'd
To mastery in studies men affect ;
And seldom progress in as well as she,
Looks down on all our sex o'erbearingly,
And leaves the field to lovely Lady Blanche,
Who, though she smiles on courtship, looks as cold
On matrimony as her scornful friend ;
While troops besiege her—I among the rest.
But now good-bye to Venus ! Mars commands !
Be ready, Robert, for the route to-morrow !
We march at one ; meanwhile to Ludgate Hill
I go, that careless artisan to chide
My beaver jewel who so slightly set,
I lost it in the street. Men call me fop,
And so I am, so will be, and why not ?

It is my humour ! Better fop than fool ;
And he's a fool that does not please himself.
And so the more they smile, the more they may ;
The more I 'll give them cause, and smile myself,
Sitting at ease in mine own snug content,
Wearing a cheery, frank, and saucy cheek !
Now tell me, Robert, what men say of me ?
What comeliness they give me credit for
Besides my person, which I know will pass ?

ROBERT.

They say, though rather vain, you are very brave.

SIR PHILIP.

What is it to be brave ? I give Heaven thanks
I was not born a spaniel !—What had I
To do with that ? Find something of mine own
For which they praise me, I will thank them then !
What say they to my gait ? I made my gait
Myself ! There's matter in men's gait, good Robert !
Therein you have the impress of their callings ;
There is the clerk's gait, which implies obedience ;
The shopkeeper's, half service, half command ;
The merchant's, o'er-revolving speculations ;
The lawyer's, quick and keen at quirks and flaws ;
The student's, ponderous as piles of folios ;
The courtier's, supple, prompt for courtesies ;
The soldier's, keeping time with drums and trumpets ;
And twenty others—all most common-place !
But there's one gait that's paramount of all—
The gentleman's, that speaks not any calling ;
Shows him at liberty to please himself ;
And while it meditates offence to none,

Observes a proper negligence towards all,
And imperturbable complacency !

[*They go out.*

SCENE II.

MASTER BLOUNT'S *House.*—*A Room contiguous to his Shop.*

Enter JOHN BLOUNT *and* THOMAS BLOUNT.

THOMAS.

I will not bide the baiting of thy tongue !—
I say, I will not !—Let my father rail,
I'll hear him patiently. I owe not thee
Observance !—What's the year or two thou hast
The start of me ?

JOHN.

I speak but for thy good.

THOMAS.

Nay, not for that ! Thou wouldst speak kindly else !
The fault thou find'st would reach no ear but mine ;
I know thee, brother ; my defect thou makest
A finger-post to show thine own deserts,
To win me anger, while thyself win'st praise !
I know thee, John !—I say no more of this ;
I will not bear it !—should not !—I'm a man !

JOHN.

Wilt strike me ?

THOMAS.

Heaven forbid my mother's son
Should e'er get blow from me. I tell thee what,
Thou aim'st at empire of my father's heart !
Thou to my father's business wouldst be heir !

Be so !—Thou ne'er shalt find in me a let.
His stock-in-trade, good-will, whate'er he hath
Pertaining to his craft, or grown from it,
I freely from this hour renounce all share in !
I'll seek my fortune !—Here I will not stay
To play the money-grub—while men, not made
Of better metal, find themselves a name
That lifts them 'bove their birth !

Enter MASTER BLOUNT.

MASTER BLOUNT.

How 's this ?—at words ?
Thy brother John has been reproving thee,
And thou resistest him—and wherefore, son ?
Because he 's right, and thou art in the wrong !
The counter, boy !—go practise patience there !
'Twas that which made thy father, with the help
Of industry. 'Tis roof, son ; bed and board,
With which 'tis well thou art provided, else
Thou ne'er hadst earn'd them, Thomas, for thyself !

THOMAS.

I might have earn'd them, had I been allow'd !

MASTER BLOUNT.

Allow'd ?

THOMAS.

To earn them in the way I could !

MASTER BLOUNT.

Thou'dst be a soldier, or wouldst go to sea—
Chimeras evermore of boyhood's brain !

JOHN.

I never knew them, father.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Never, John ;

Thou ever didst my wish, and didst it well.

JOHN.

And found my own in it. Except for sleep
And meals, I never took an hour from work,
Nor would, suppose I might—nor cared I what
You set me to—the crucible, the vice,
The desk or counter—'twas your will, and done.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Ay, John, you are a pattern of a boy !
Go, Thomas ! copy by your elder brother !
Demean yourself submissively to him ;
Remembering thou dost thy father's will !

THOMAS.

I love my father ! Would that I could love
My father's craft—but that I cannot love !

[*Goes out following JOHN.—Enter MISTRESS BLOUNT.*

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Heard I not words ? I did !—what 's wrong with Thomas ?
John has been chafing him again ! He 's not
The boy to bear it, nor is 't right he should.
The shop don't fit him, husband ! Thou wouldst put
Thy turnspit to his use, thy hound to his.
Did any counsel thee, exchange their work ;
Thou'dst think him fool, didst thou not call him one !
Thy cart-horse foal when thou didst set to cart,
Thou didst the thing was wise !—as wisely didst
To break thy jennet's filly for the saddle ;
As beast of draught she were not worth her meat !
Givest ear to me ? Dost weigh my words ?

MASTER BLOUNT.

I do.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

And if thou dost, thou wilt not find them light.
And dost perceive the sequel?

MASTER BLOUNT.

No.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

I am sure

Thou dost not! Never canst thou see the thing
That lies not straight before thee. Ope thine eyes,
And I will put the sequel in their range
Point blank! Men vary more than horse or dog.
Not as the parentage the progeny!
The noble's cradle rocks a churl—the churl's
A nobleman! A simple craftsman thou,
Hast son the craft was never made would fit;—
And he must drudge because his father did!

MASTER BLOUNT.

Drudge, dost thou say?

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Ay, drudge! and say 't again.

MASTER BLOUNT.

His brother drudges.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

So his brother may:
It is his humour; he's his father's son.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Whom takes the other after?

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Whom?—why me!
I tell thee, Thomas is his mother's son,

No handicraft will he make progress in ;
Money he values for the using on't—
Would buy a coach and horses in the time
Thou balancest the outlay of a truck !

MASTER BLOUNT.

A hopeful son, methinks, has Master Blount,
The Ludgate jeweler.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Most hopeful, John ;
But not in the shape thou wishest hope to come in,
With sleek comb'd hair and ponderous busy brow,
Scanning a bodkin to resolve him whether
'Tis gold or pinchbeck !—I forgot !—Thy hope
Hath comely apron on !—Now look at mine !
A youth of standard height ! proportion'd well
In trunk and limb ! Of handsome face and bold !
Very ! A cap and plume upon his head,
Across his field of breast a scarf and belt,
And in the belt a sword, as fits a man !

MASTER BLOUNT.

What cavalier is this ?

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

What cavalier ?
Thou knowest not thine own son, husband John !
I lose all patience with thee ! Listen now !
Thou hast a son whom fortune meant to climb,
And thou wouldst have to creep !—What use is he
In thy shop or workshop, where thou cast'dst him when
He came from school, as metal that is fused
Into the mould, thinking he'd take what shape
It pleased thee give him ?—Flesh and blood are not

So passive, John !—How little knowest thou,
Dear John, beyond thy trade ! Nine months ago
Lapsed his apprenticeship of seven long years,
And earns he now the keep of journeyman ?
No !—do I blame him ? No !—when thou get'st gold
To do the work of lead, I'll blame him, John,
But not till then.

MASTER BLOUNT.

The fault is thine.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Is mine !

Am I in fault ?

MASTER BLOUNT.

I say—

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Am I in fault ?

MASTER BLOUNT.

I won't say fault.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Go on.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Thou hast him taught
The ways of gentleman. Contents thee not
He learn our homely measures, he must skip
As courtiers do, so thou providest him with
A foreign dancing-master ! Not enough
The jockey taught his brother should teach him,
Behoves him have a soldier's seat, and so
Thou get'st a regimental riding-master !

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Proceed, good husband John.

MASTER BLOUNT.

It pleased thee not
Dick Cottingham should teach him quarter-staff—

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Dick Cottingham !—I'd beat Dick Cottingham
At quarter-staff myself !—

MASTER BLOUNT.

Thou must employ
Professionals in that.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Teach a boy right,
Or not at all ! Go on !

MASTER BLOUNT.

From quarter-staff
He needs must to the rapier go.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

No doubt !

MASTER BLOUNT.

The which—not satisfied the boy should get
A simple notion on't—he practises
Till he can beat his master.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Art not glad
Of that ?—Art thou not glad on't, husband John ?
The day will come, and mind my words it will,
When thou wilt chuckle at it !—chuckle, husband !
Thy boy can beat his master !—who'll beat him ?

MASTER BLOUNT.

John is as good a boy !

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Who cheapens John ?

What loss to him his brother gets his due?
He likes the inside of the counter!—Well,
He has it!—Thomas likes the other side!
And yet thou know'st not John!—Though he's my son,
He's cunning. 'Tis not natural in one
So young in years to be in acts so old.
The husbandman prefers a backward spring!
The fruit is doubted comes before its time!
Did John observe thee less, 'twould please me more!
What wouldst thou say now should I tell thee plain
His fancies look a mile beyond the shop,
In which thou think'st his heart wrapp'd wholly up?
'Tis so; he'd laugh to throw the apron off
He smiles at putting on!

MASTER BLOUNT.

Thou wrong'st him, wife.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Believe so, as thou wilt—let me know Thomas.
He'll ne'er ply craft, but be a gentleman.
That time is come with you, and still you toil.

MASTER BLOUNT.

I'll think on what thou say'st.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

So, husband, do.
The man who has a wife hath counsel, John,
At hand that's ever better than his own! [Goes out.]

SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT (*without*).

Within is he? Then I'll step in to him.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Sir Philip Brilliant!—He speaks angrily.

SIR PHILIP (*entering*).

How comes it, Master Blount, you treat me thus?
Why callest thou thyself a jeweler,
And set'st a gem so carelessly, as soon
As worn, 'tis lost? Where is the brilliant, sir,
I paid thee down a hundred crowns for? Look!
'Tis gone (*showing his hat*).

MASTER BLOUNT.

I see it is, and grieve for it.

SIR PHILIP.

Wilt thou replace it?

MASTER BLOUNT.

Is it fit I should?

SIR PHILIP.

Yes; for you set it.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Yes; and set it well!

SIR PHILIP.

Well, Master Blount! Set'st thou a jewel well,
And falls it out as soon as set?

MASTER BLOUNT.

The loop
You must have strain'd!—You flung your beaver down,
And gave it blow, perhaps; or doffing it
Too freely, swung'st against a wall or rail,
And shook'st, thyself, the jewel from its seat.

SIR PHILIP.

Not so I doff my beaver!—throw it down!
'Sdeath, Master Blount, thou think'st it not enough
Through fault of thee I lose a peerless gem—
Thou must disparage, too, my bearing, sir!

My carriage, sir, wherein I stand alone,
Which prize beyond a mine—ay, mines of gems!
I fling my beaver down?—I strike a wall
Or rail, in doffing it? I?—I?—The gem
I might forgive, but can't pass over that!
Down, sir, and beg my pardon!

THOMAS (*coming forward*).

He shall not!
The gem was fitly set.

SIR PHILIP.

How knowest thou?

THOMAS.

My father says it!—That the gem was lost,
Was fault of thine alone.

SIR PHILIP.

Do you know me?

THOMAS.

Yes.

SIR PHILIP.

I know thou dost; yet knowing it, I doubt
Through wonder at thy boldness, sirrah!

THOMAS.

What!

SIR PHILIP.

Knows't thou what cuffs are?

THOMAS.

Yes; I have given them!

SIR PHILIP.

Ay?

'Tis time thou learn to take them.

THOMAS.

Thou'rt not he
Can teach me that.

SIR PHILIP (*aside to him*).

Ay?—Thou prefer'st perhaps

A higher lesson. Canst thou use a sword?

THOMAS (*aside to PHILIP*).

By trying thou canst judge.

SIR PHILIP (*aside to THOMAS*).

If worthy one,

Thou'lt steal a rapier out and follow me

A pace beyond the wall—I'll wait thee there. [*Goes out.*]

MASTER BLOUNT.

What said he, Thomas?

THOMAS.

Something—nothing, sir.

His fault methinks he half begins to see.

That errand, brother, you would send me on,

I hasten now to do.

MASTER BLOUNT.

What errand, Thomas?

THOMAS.

John will inform you, sir.

[*Goes out.*]

MASTER BLOUNT.

What is it, John?

JOHN.

I vow he has scared my memory out of me.

MASTER BLOUNT.

What errand has thy brother gone upon?

JOHN.

I vow I have forgot.

MASTER BLOUNT.

There's something more

Than he would let me see.—Thy cap, boy, haste,

While I get mine, for we must after him! [*They go out.*]

SCENE III.

The outside of London Wall.—Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT.

SIR PHILIP.

The goldsmith's son has won me ! There are men,
I have heard warriors say, look beautiful
In action. So would he !—How radiantly
The man shone out ! We 'll change a pass or two.
I 'll touch him, that I prove him ! 'Tis one thing
To talk about the rapier's point, another
To look upon it, and another yet
To feel it. He shall feel it—not to rue it !
He comes ! There is purpose in his looks ! His heart
And feet are going the same way ! The man
I take him for !—worth winning for a friend !
You have made haste.

Enter THOMAS.

THOMAS.

What haste I could.

SIR PHILIP.

I know it,
And I expected it, and like you for it !
I love an enemy to be in earnest !
You are sure you use the rapier.

THOMAS.

Judge yourself—
I am ready for you !—Come !

[*They fight.*]

SIR PHILIP.

You are too hot,
And lay yourself too open. Twice just now
I could have run you through !

THOMAS.

Why did not you ?

SIR PHILIP.

Aha ! Beware, or you will make me hug you !

THOMAS.

Come on.

SIR PHILIP.

Be cooler, then.

THOMAS.

I will.

SIR PHILIP.

That's right !

Most sweetly parried !—Better yet return'd !

That feint was masterly ; I balk'd it though—

I have hit you !

THOMAS.

No ! Come on !

SIR PHILIP.

I am sure I have !

THOMAS.

Come on !

SIR PHILIP.

You felt me, for I felt my point !

THOMAS.

Come on, I say !

SIR PHILIP.

Since you will have it so !

That longe meant something, but it would not do.

Prepare !—I'll hit you now again ! 'Tis done !

THOMAS.

I fight, not talk !

SIR PHILIP.

I talk whene'er I fight,
As when I eat or drink.

THOMAS.

Come on !

SIR PHILIP.

Again !
I have hit you thrice.

THOMAS.

I feel no wound !

SIR PHILIP.

There's blood !

THOMAS.

A scratch brings blood !

SIR PHILIP.

A deep one, though, it takes
To drain the cheek ; and thine is growing pale—
Not, I'll be sworn, with fear ! I touch'd you only
Because I meant to sting you, not to kill,
Before I knew you as I know you now.
But knowing you as now I do, I swear
I would not kill you for mine own life's sake,
Which at your will I place !

[Throws down his sword ; THOMAS drops his, and tottering towards SIR PHILIP, faints in his arms.]

I fear'd 'twas so,
But fear no worse.—He faints, from loss of blood ;
A flesh-wound, nothing graver—stanch'd, 'tis heal'd !

Enter MASTER BLOUNT and JOHN.

MASTER BLOUNT.

Sir Philip, what's amiss ?

SIR PHILIP.

Your son revives ;
A passing sickness only, Master Blount ;
Stanching removes it quite. Your handkerchief
To keep the compress on I make of mine.
His colour comes again and all is right !
Now hear you, Master Blount. Ne'er left your shop
A jewel rich as is this son of yours.
Commit his fortunes to my hands !—You shall !
I have proved his metal—it has won my heart,
And turn'd me from a foe into a friend ;
Yea more, a brother, bound to him as fast
As he partition'd with me the same blood.
Refuse me not !—I will not be gainsaid !
My footman comes—my carriage is at hand.

Enter FOOTMAN.

The gem I lost I will forgive thee for,
And fifty to its back, so grant me this.
Although not born a gentleman, thy son
Was form'd to be one ; such I'll make of him !
So farewell desk and counter, Master Blount !
There!—gently—come along with us !—Take care !

[SIR PHILIP and his footman, supporting THOMAS,
go out, followed by MASTER BLOUNT.]

JOHN.

The shop is now my own ! As we came hither,
My father said he would retire from it,
And leave his trade to me !—and if he does,
Not long his trade and I keep company.
We have been intimates too close—too long—
Familiarity begets contempt !

I hate and scorn my trade. He little knows
What riches burrow in his drawers and chests ;
The keys of which I keep, and he forgets !
My plans are laid !—Soon as he quits the town,
I sell off stock and trade, and quit the shop !
Talk of our Thomas !—He a gentleman !
Where is the money ? I have taken care
Of that ! From interest on his bonds alone
My father will retire in affluence ;
The rest is mine, and I'll make use of it
To lay myself out for a high alliance
By marriage !—Trust to me for policy.
If there is one thing I am better in
Than any other thing—'tis policy.

[*Goes out.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Park.

Enter ROBERT, STEPHEN, *and* JACOB.

ROBERT.

HE is as rich as Cræsus, sirs, with wit
Enough to keep his purse-strings tight, unless
His own particular occasion prompts
The wish to loosen them ! He is at once
Luxurious and a miser.—Some good nature,
More cunning, less discretion. You see through him,
He has a vanity which lays him open
To commonest observers : for example,—
Know him an hour, and he spreads out for you
A banquet of his tastes, his faculties,
His qualities ; wherein he most succeeds—
Which is by turns, indeed, in everything—
Not that he would appear to slight his neighbours,
Or wish to pass for anything, beyond
A common, simple, ordinary man !

STEPHEN.

Where made you this redoubtable acquaintance ?

ROBERT.

Why, at a race-course, on a holiday,
When fortune made us neighbours. One who knew me
At distance, gave me salutation by

The title which I hold in virtue of
My place near fair Sir Phillip ! In a moment
I was a friend the richer ! Straight he grappled me ;
His name, his station, income, residence,
All in a twink were mine—his sole omission
The stock he sprung from, which he would root up—
Yea, sirs, the very father that begot him !
And gave up stock and trade to him—and affluence
Beyond his calculation ; the slow piling
Of fifty years and upwards, to himself
Grown out of mind, but not to his successor ;
Who having long imprison'd upstart wishes
Beneath the homely apron of his craft,
Now throws this off, no more of use to him,
And shows the others, need no more concealment !
Converts his drawers and shelves to currency,
His currency to lands and messuages,
And o'er the tradesman's counter featly vaulting,
Springs into the saddle of the gentleman !
By strangest chance I learnt his history.

JACOB.

Hopeful acquaintance.

ROBERT.

Say fruition-full !
Well, sir, " I must go home with him ; partake
What a plain dresser sends." Ere dinner's done,
I am in his bosom ! Now beseeches he
My list of lady spinsters, which I give him,
The features, stature, carriage and complexion,
Wit, temper, parentage and education ;
When of my goodness prays he introduction
To one I think would suit him !

STEPHEN.

Which, of course,
You grant him.

ROBERT.

Readily !

STEPHEN.

My life upon it,
'The countess!

JACOB.

Charlotte !—Maid to Lady Jane ?

ROBERT.

No less.

JACOB.

Had he but known the rogue he dealt with !
A simpleton as safe beside a sharper !

ROBERT.

Yet knowing, modestly, I had my masters
Compared to whom I am a journeyman,
I promised presentation to your lordships—
For you are lords in virtue of your places,
As I, in right of mine, a baronet—
And here appointed him this afternoon
His walk to that intent ! Ah, here he is !
I pray you keep your rank before your eyes
In all you say and do. They only may
Forget their rank who have good title to it,
And by the lapse prove gainers. Mind, you are lords.

JOHN (*entering*).

Good morning to you, fair Sir Philip. Fair
Is fairest worth.—So, sir, I bow to you.

ROBERT.

The noble friends I had the honour, sir,
Of naming to you—this Lord Stephen Hyde,
And this Lord John Fitzwalter.

JOHN.

Dear me, sir,
You overpower me !—May I use the freedom
To shake hands with your lordships ?

STEPHEN.

'Tis a boon, sir,
We would entreat of you !

JOHN (*to* ROBERT).

There's noble breeding !

ROBERT.

Whence come you ?

JOHN.

From my after-dinner airing,
In my own phaeton, built to my own order,
After a pattern of my own designing ;
The springs my own, the perch, the pole, the colour,
Harness and everything ! So please your lordships,
I have a taste, and it shall have its way
While I can pay for it.

STEPHEN.

As right it should, sir.

JOHN.

Then am I fond of driving.

JACOB.

Most men like
The thing that they excel in.

JOHN.

Oh, my lord !—

Your lordship may have seen me hold the reins—
I flatter myself you have !

JACOB.

You may so safely.

JOHN.

I could have sworn you had ! If there is one thing
I master 'fore another, it is holding
The reins.

ROBERT.

What did you before breakfast ?

JOHN.

Ride—

Your lordships fancy horses ?—All men do
Who have good judgment and can back them well.
Mine are all thorough-bred !—my hackney even !—
And broke in for myself.—A horse, my lords,
Should know his master, and him only !—No
Believing what a universe of mischief
Is done by a strange hand ! The mouth is spoil'd !—
If not the mouth, the pace ; if not the pace,
The temper !—maybe temper, pace, and mouth
Together !—What 's the value of the horse ?
And then the seat—no easy thing, my lords !
Of fifty men who vault into the saddle,
Not one may have a seat there ! In the manage
Be there one thing wherein I beat another,
'Tis in my seat !

STEPHEN.

Most safely may you say it.

JOHN.

Your lordship, I presume, has seen me ride.
Sir Philip, 'hope you have not got a headache ?

ROBERT.

Not I!—have you?

JOHN.

Why something rather like one,
For which I blame the wine of yesterday.

ROBERT.

Nay, sir, the wine was good.

JOHN.

Oh, excellent ;
A most sound wine, and of the proper age ;
Three years in wood, in bottle thrice that time ;
The merchant durst not cheat me, for he knows me.
I ne'er keep wine but of prime quality !
I have a cellar—no one less occasion
To find fault with his wine !—were mine not good,
The money was that bought it !—but no foresight
Is match against mishap !—a bottle may
Be cork'd. 'Twas so with the last bottle ! At
The time I had a slight suspicion only,
But now I am positive !

ROBERT.

You are deceived.

JOHN.

Impossible, my dear Sir Philip. If
I am superlative in anything,
Beyond all other things that I excel in,
'Tis in my taste for wine !

ROBERT.

But now to business !
My noble friends approve the match we spoke of,
And promise you their interest, to help
Your wish to its fulfilment !

JOHN.

They o'erpower me !
My lords, I am beholden to you more
Than did I ransack the whole dictionary,
I could find words of value to convey me !
Befits it, though, a private gentleman,
Of modest fortune only, at the best,
Should offer hand to dame of quality ?
Talk'd you not, dear Sir Philip, of promotion ?

ROBERT.

Oh, yes !—promotion certainly—Lord John,
Where have you the most interest ? in church
Or state ?

STEPHEN.

Tis difficult to say—let's see !
Upon my word, I think it is a balance !

ROBERT.

And how say you, Lord Stephen ?

JACOB.

Like Lord John,
In church and state, my interest is equal.

ROBERT (*to JOHN*).

How leans your predilection ?—to the church ?

JOHN.

Why, hang it, no ! the surplice spoils the figure,
A man and gown sort strangely !—faucy me
In a gown ! I might endure it on the Sunday,
But for the week-day gear that 's tack'd to it !
Of formal mode and sombre colour ! Dress
All the year round most like an undertaker
In waiting upon funerals !—could I wear
This cap and plume were I a clergyman ?

ROBERT *and the rest.*

No, certainly !

JOHN.

The church won't do for me.

ROBERT.

It must be in the state, then ! For what office
Would you be ready on emergency,
Say one fell sudden vacant ?

JOHN.

Will you believe me,
I cannot tell !

ROBERT.

There is the home department,
And there's the foreign ! There's the minister
Of war and of finance !—Diplomacy
Perhaps might suit your genius ! Which of these
Would find you most at home, sir ?

JOHN.

Do you know,
I'm at a loss to tell !—Indeed I am !
Upon my life I am !—To answer you
Safely for both your credit and my own,
I think 'twere best I say, as likely one
As another.

ROBERT.

Doubtless there is none you fear
To undertake.

JOHN.

None !—Fear ? No fear, Sir Philip !
Find me the office, I am sure to find
Abilities to fill it !

ROBERT.

Yet perhaps

There's something you prefer to church or state ;
What think you of the army ?

JOHN.

Of the army ?

It is my taste, my bent, my very instinct !
It must be ! why should else a fife and drum
Raise in me such commotion ? When I hear them,
The war is all before me !—Infantry,
Cavalry, and artillery, and baggage !
Marchings, encampings, battles, sieges !—Feats
In the field and breach of superhuman daring,
Such perils breasted and o'ercome, as man
Durst never cope before with—look at—think of—
All of my own conceiving !

ROBERT.

Dream you never
Of dying in such straits ?

JOHN.

No !—Never !

ROBERT.

Strange !—
I may say wonderful.

JOHN.

You may !—Through bayonets
And swords I rush, as they were stubble—hail
Of cannon balls, shells, musketry, no more
Than wither'd leaves blown round by winds in autumn !

ROBERT.

And are you never wounded ?

D

JOHN.

Wounded?—Yes!
Struck down, but up and on my feet again
Almost in the self-same moment!

ROBERT.

Pain and all
Forgotten.

JOHN.

As a pin had scratch'd me.

ROBERT.

And
Enacting more than ever!

JOHN.

Miracles!

STEPHEN.

He certainly was born to be a soldier.

JOHN.

And such I will be with your leaves, my lords.
What rank?

ROBERT.

Behoves you be an ensign first,
From ensign to lieutenant, thence to captain,
On captain mounts the major, on the major
The colonel.

JOHN.

Takes it long to be the colonel?

ROBERT.

By service long, by interest not at all!

JOHN.

I'll choose the army.

ROBERT.

Yet, my lords, a word:

'**T**will never do to court proud lady Blanche
As ensign or lieutenant; nay, as even
Captain or major!—Nothing less, my lord,
Than colonel! Here is a dilemma!

STEPHEN.

A
Dilemma certainly.

JACOB.

A sad dilemma.

JOHN.

My lords!—Sir Philip—what is to be done?

ROBERT.

Stop!—Hold!—I have it!—What is sure to come
One surely may regard as come already!

STEPHEN.

Ay! come as certain as about to come.

ROBERT.

And why not call him colonel then at once?
Your lordship will have no objection?

STEPHEN.

None.

JOHN.

My dear good lord.

ROBERT.

Nor you, my lord.

JACOB.

No more
Than his lordship.

JOHN.

My most excellent good lord!

ROBERT.

Then, Colonel Blount, I give you joy!

JOHN.

My dear
Sir Philip!

STEPHEN *and* JACOB.

Give you joy, fair Colonel Blount.

JOHN.

Dear lords—dear friend—I choke with gratitude.

ROBERT.

There only wants the introduction now,
Which I'll accomplish with your lordship's help.
I know you'll patronise my friend, whilst I
Take charge of Lady Blanche; and as we go,
We'll settle time and place! Come, Colonel; show us
How you can court!

JOHN.

Court, sir?—Did you say, court?
Therein am I especially at home!
May I presume on any excellence
I have, it is on knowing how to court! [They go out.]

SCENE II.

A Room in the House of LADY ANNE.

Enter CHARLOTTE *and* JANE.

CHARLOTTE.

A fine plot, is it not?

JANE.

But where the profit,
Besides the mirth 'twill bring you?

CHARLOTTE.

Quite enough !

JANE.

You have not seen him yet ?

CHARLOTTE.

That happiness
Lies in perspective. They appoint to-day
The time and place of meeting. If, by chance,
You note me in the street with a strange friend,
Remember I'm the countess—pass me by,
Unless I give you sign I am myself.

JANE.

And Robert plann'd it all ?

CHARLOTTE.

Robert ?—For shame,
Sir Philip, if you please ! If, when together,
We talk of one another, keep in mind
We are our noble selves ! You, Lady Anne !—
I, Lady Blanche !—Robert, Sir Philip Brilliant,
Jacob and Stephen of their masters' styles ;
Lord John Fitzwalter and Lord Stephen Hyde !
And so through all our circle of familiars !
'Tis but with such as do not understand us,
Who know us less than we do one another,
We pass for commoners !—You are new to us !
Sir Philip is the author of the plot.
'Twas not to lose his time he went to college—
No more than others born and bred above him—
And spent three years there ! You will travel ere
You find his match in mischief.

JANE (*listening*).

Did you hear
My lady's voice?

CHARLOTTE.

I heard that person speak.

JANE.

That person?

CHARLOTTE.

Lady Anne, 'long as you live,
Never let down yourself!—You'll find too many
Ready to do that kindness for you.

JANE (*listening*).

There
Is Lady Blanche.

CHARLOTTE.

I think it is that person.
Don't look surprised—although we owe her some
Consideration, as our foster sister,
Who shared with us our mother's nurture—nay,
Participates with us almost one nature,
Making a jest of love and sport of lovers;
While she you deign to serve escheweth both!
We trust your ladyship will be at home
To-morrow when we call.

JANE.

Yes, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE.

Charlotte! Forgive me, Lady Anne—your ladyship
Forgets yourself! 'Tis Lady Blanche departs
And bids good morning to your ladyship!

[*They go out severally.*]

SCENE III.

*Another Room.**Enter LADY BLANCHE and LADY ANNE.*

LADY BLANCHE.

Man!—man!—the paragon!—the fool he is
When women know themselves and know to treat him;
The knave when left to his own practices!
Is there a husband you can name, who bears
His course of wooing out?—who does not prove it
A trade of common snaring?—who resembles
The man he was before the honey-moon?
A woman's life, my friend, from girlhood onwards
Has melancholy progress! She begins
A goddess; then declines into a bride—
Which means a young wife keeping holiday,
As children sent to school go not at once
To tasks—next sinks into a housekeeper—
Her wedding ring her badge of office!—thence
Haply into a nurse!—When matters not
How soon she settles into grandmama,
To tell her offspring of her second stock
The story of her cozening!

LADY ANNE.

How I love you
When thus you talk! Would all our sex were like you!
And, yet, you suffer men, while I repel them!

LADY BLANCHE.

I suffer them to plague them, and I do so.

You are an old maid by anticipation,
And make the arch dissemblers stand aloof.
Oh, how I dote upon a staunch old maid !—
I'll die one !—She stands up for liberty ;
Talk of the rights of men ! The rights that want
Upholding are the rights of women !—Men
Are tyrants ! have too many rights ! We know it !
Ours are the rights want champions ! We should be lost
Without old maids —Oh, the delicious crabs !
The faces men make at them when they find them
Their masters !

LADY ANNE.

Women have more soul than men.

LADY BLANCHE.

Men have no soul at all compared to women ;
Look at Queen Bess ! The man she made of England—
A man to cuff all comers ! She was in fault
In one thing, though.

LADY ANNE.

And prithee what was that ?

LADY BLANCHE.

She did not call her own sex to her councils !
Which had she done, women had proved themselves
The things they could be, would men give them leave !
Cecil and Burleigh !—Bacon !—What were they
But what a woman made them ? Men, indeed !
There was a sample of man's proper place,
When Essex got his ears box'd !—Do you feel
Your fingers tingle ? Mine do !—Yet was she
In love with Essex !

LADY ANNE.

Were you ne'er in love ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Are you in madness ! Wherefore do you ask ?

LADY ANNE.

Because of late whene'er you talk of love
You sigh ! I have had strange thoughts about you, Blanche.
They call you a coquette, and so you are ;
Yet something tells me, once upon a time
You felt a touch of love. Do you remember
A certain fair Whit Monday ? Ah, you blush !

LADY BLANCHE.

Because you tax me !—Blush !—That fair Whit Monday
We went a-shopping ; and, for an adventure,
Disguised ourselves as simple yeomen's daughters.
What's there to blush at ?

LADY ANNE.

Nothing, if no more—
If nothing follow'd—if that fair Whit Monday
You did not make a conquest of a youth
Who waited on us.

LADY BLANCHE.

Was it at the draper's ?

LADY ANNE.

No, Blanche. No youth was in the draper's shop !

LADY BLANCHE.

The mercer's, then.

LADY ANNE.

Nor was it at the mercer's,
Nor yet the cordwainer's—where had it been,
How had the blushing youth contrived to take
The span of your maidship's instep, all the while
His eyes upon your face—whence, as I live,
He never moved them till we left the shop,

Except to find the articles we ask'd for !—
A youth misused of fate to set him, where
Behoved his betters rather wait than he !
A lofty forehead, like a marble dome
For princely thoughts to dwell in ! eyes to court
Challenge of war or love, showing themselves
Frankly and boldly at their posts—a nose
Of the fine Grecian with a touch of Rome,
Elegance crown'd with strength ; a mouth composed
Of lips were fashion'd after Cupid's bow,
And, like it, made to send his arrow home,
Wing'd with their dulcet twang ! Ambitious chin,
Dimpled and knobb'd like pattern Antinous !
There is his face, which well his neck and bust
Deserved ; as for the rest of him, you know
The counter hid him from us.

LADY BLANCHE.

Counter-like,
In calculation of the drawback, doubtless,
His head and bust had suffer'd through the fault
Of his mis-shapen legs. I should not wonder
Had he clubb'd feet.

LADY ANNE.

Have you not seen his feet ?
Come ! Did you never on adventure go
A-shopping there again ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Well, Anne, I did !
Again, and yet again.—Nay, do not laugh,
'Twas only to enjoy the goldsmith's blush !

LADY ANNE.

There, Blanche ! Just now you could not find the shop !

LADY BLANCHE.

Well ! things will jump into one's memory
When least we look for them. Why do you laugh ?
Don't laugh, dear Anne, and I will tell you more !
I took the goldsmith to my milliner's
One day when he perforce would see me home :
A yeoman's daughter could not well, you know,
O'errule a goldsmith's son. Well, at the door
In vain I dropp'd him court'sy after court'sy,
In linsey-woolsey mode ! He would not go.
" He must have speech with me a minute ! "—" Nay ! "
" Indeed, he must,"—then said I, " Nay," again.
" He must in pity,"—Still did I say, " Nay."
But what's the use of " nay," said fifty times,
If " yes " at last will come ?—and come it did :
" He might have speech a minute ! " What's a minute ?
A portion of an hour ! A portion gone,
The hour is broken !—What's the value of
A broken thing ?—as well he have the hour !
The hour he had ! The goldsmith's son was smitten ;
Love at first sight !—The arrow in the core !
Whereat the maid amused—it may be, pleased ;
Touch'd, will you have it so.—Well, she was touch'd !—
Did after grant the goldsmith divers meetings,
Listening in silence to his rhapsodies
In rustic cloak, with hood drawn o'er her head,
Her face but half revealing ! Till, at length,
Feeling a something—nothing like a passion !—
Perhaps an interest—yes ; like that one watches
The progress of a pleasant story with,
But which indulging is but waste of time ;
Having a horror, too, of slavery—

No matter how far out of reach of it ;
And then, besides, admonish'd by my rank ;
At last I took the resolution
To drop the masquerade—although, I own,
With some compunction.

LADY ANNE.

He deserved some.

LADY BLANCHE.

He !
Why, was he not a man !—He proved he was !
Made out his right and title.—'Took his leave
Without good-bye, by word or yet by missive ;
Since when I ne'er have met him. 'Twas as well,
Although it mortified me !—Nothing more.

LADY ANNE.

Who, think you, is come home ? Sir Philip Brilliant.
When we have time, I'll let you hear a tale
Of him that does him honour. His adventure
Was likewise with a goldsmith's son.

LADY BLANCHE.

Perhaps
The same.—What was it ?—Come, the heads of it !

LADY ANNE.

They chanced to quarrel ; fought. His adversary,
Though wounded, would not own it, till almost
He dropp'd with loss of blood—whereat Sir Philip,
Amazed and captivated, grew his friend ;
Took him abroad with him, and step by step
Has raised to his own rank. He comes with him,
This very evening, to pay visit to me,
And introduce the gentleman.

LADY BLANCHE.

His name?

LADY ANNE.

I never thought to ask it !

LADY BLANCHE.

Should it be!

You and Sir Philip are good friends, it seems.

On me he has not call'd !

LADY ANNE.

He is your slave.

You have him at your foot whene'er you please ;

I own it has amazed me that a man,

So slight to contemplate, should have achieved

An act of generous manhood so robust

In healthy comeliness.

JANE (*entering*).

Sir Philip Brilliant.

Enter SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT *and* THOMAS, *as* COLONEL
BLOUNT.

LADY ANNE.

Welcome, Sir Philip.

SIR PHILIP.

Colonel Blount, my friend.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

The goldsmith's son.

SIR PHILIP.

Fair Lady Anne, I kiss

Your hand, and for my friend here, Colonel Blount,

Claim your acquaintance.

LADY ANNE (*to Lady Blanche*).

'Tis the goldsmith's son !

He does not know you !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

How should he—he never

Beheld my face except beneath my hood,
How can he in the Countess find a trace
O' the simple yeoman's maid?—You'll pardon me,
I must go home! Good evening!—Go you to
The rout to-night, Sir Philip?

SIR PHILIP.

Yes.

LADY BLANCHE.

We'll meet;
And I can answer for our host, he'll thank you
To bring your friend.—Farewell.—Good morning, sir.

[Goes out.]

LADY ANNE (*aside*).

She seems disturb'd.

SIR PHILIP.

Fair Lady Anne, permit
My friend to write a line that asks despatch,—
Forgot on leaving home!

LADY ANNE.

The library!
Pray you step in and freely help yourself.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I thank you, lady!—How resemblances,
The most remote, recal familiar things,
As in a ray of light one sees the sun!
Less than the ray unto the sun is she
That's gone, to her whose image she recall'd,
And set before my mind as palpably,
As though the paragon stood there before me!

[Goes out.]

SIR PHILIP.

Dear Lady Anne, in your kind welcome back
I gladly miss'd your wonted scorn of me.

LADY ANNE.

Gladly !—why name it then to bring it back ?
See what you 've done ! What shall I call thee now ?
Ware from the milliner's, the tailor's, or
The cordwainer's, or jeweller's, or what ?
Thyself is the least part of thee ! The man
Is trimmings to the dress.—Thou art a ruff
Of plaits elaborate and infinite ;
Thy vest for curiosity of style,
Armour of diamonds upon velvet plaited,
Were better given a cabinet to keep
As theme for wonderment to after time,
Than left provision for the hungry air
That's sure to eat it up ! Thy jerkin runs
Enormous risk from thy ambition ! trying
With satin slashes, ribbon-knots, and lace,
How close to woman's gear a man's may come,
And still appear a man's—thy trunks partake
Its divers sins ; and for thy hose, who says,
In town or out of town, thou walk'st not in
A shrubbery, why let him own he is blind,
To save his credit for veracity !
Thy very rapier would abjure the man !
Its handle vouches for the laceman more
Than the cutler—nay, nor him beside alone ;
'Twas plann'd in concert with a milliner !
Which of the precious metals has the honour
To help it to a blade ? It cannot be
A thing so exquisitely delicate
Could pair with homely steel ?

SIR PHILIP.

Give over !

LADY ANNE.

I will.

SIR PHILIP.

I want a friend, dear Lady Anne.

LADY ANNE.

A friend ?

And come you to a woman for a friend ?

Better you seek a man.

SIR PHILIP.

He cannot help me,

A woman can ; she knows a woman's mind,

And how 'tis hit ; which being donè, they say,

Her heart 's in jeopardy !

LADY ANNE.

Who say so ? They

Who do not know her ! Hit her heart, you are sure

Of her mind.

SIR PHILIP.

No easy thing to do ! For, now,

Three years and upwards have I tried to hit

The heart of Lady Blanche !

LADY ANNE.

I know you have.

SIR PHILIP.

Three years are past, yet am I now as wide

As ever of the mark.

LADY ANNE.

Had you guess'd that

At setting out, what labour had you spared,

Or spent perhaps to more account, employ'd

On some one else ! Sir Philip !

SIR PHILIP.

Lady Anne?

LADY ANNE.

For three years have you been my fair acquaintance ;
And if I err not, all that lapse of time
You have enjoy'd good health !

SIR PHILIP.

Nay ; no man better !

LADY ANNE.

Yor appetite has never fail'd you ?

SIR PHILIP.

Never !

LADY ANNE.

So I should think !—You have always slept o' nights ?

SIR PHILIP.

From laying down my head to lifting it !

LADY ANNE.

Sound sleep?—No trouble in the shape of dreams?

SIR PHILIP.

None that I recollect.

LADY ANNE.

And yet in love !

And not successfully !—'Tis very strange !

SIR PHILIP.

'Tis very strange.

LADY ANNE.

Come, tell me how you feel
Towards Lady Blanche ? What are the signs whereby
You know you love her, when you think of her ?
Do you sigh very deeply ?

SIR PHILIP.

I'm not sure
That I do sigh at all—but I'm in love.

LADY ANNE.

You cannot be in love, unless you sigh.

SIR PHILIP.

A man may sigh, without his knowing it.

LADY ANNE.

That's true. How feel you when another man
Detains her ear aloof?

SIR PHILIP.

How feel I then?
How should I feel?

LADY ANNE.

Do you not purse your brows?

SIR PHILIP.

No!

LADY ANNE.

No!—Do you not bite your lip?

SIR PHILIP.

No!

LADY ANNE.

No?

Nor clench your hand?

SIR PHILIP.

Nor clench my hand!—Why should I?

LADY ANNE.

Could you not knock him down?

SIR PHILIP.

I'd like to know
For what?

LADY ANNE.

You would like to know for what? You are deep,

You are very deep in love. What would you do
With Lady Blanche, suppose you married her?

SIR PHILIP.

Show her to court and town—go everywhere,
And take her with me, that the world might see
She that rejected scores of suits was mine.

LADY ANNE.

It is his vanity that loves, not he! (*aside*)
No enterprise of danger then it seems
I help you in instructing you the way
To win the heart of lovely Lady Blanche!

SIR PHILIP.

None.

LADY ANNE.

Should we fail, you are a sound man still;
There is no fear of dying, falling sick,
Of loss of appetite, or sleep, or aught
Pernicious to your comfort?

SIR PHILIP.

Not the least!

LADY ANNE.

If you should fail, you fail; if win, you win!
Indifferent which!

SIR PHILIP.

Nay, I would rather win.

LADY ANNE.

You ought, that covet it so heartily.

SIR PHILIP.

Now, then, my lesson! What am I to do?

LADY ANNE.

'Tis plain she likes you not, the man you are.

SIR PHILIP.

'Tis very plain.

LADY ANNE.

Then be another man.

This outlay of attire—this garniture
Of trimmings and of trinkets—looks not well
In certain women's eyes. It comes too near
Themselves.

SIR PHILIP.

It does so!

LADY ANNE.

Change this gear at once.

Dress well, but let it be like other men,
Nothing particular—as if you'd say
“Look at me, ladies; how do you like me?” What
A question for a man! and do not speak
Between a simper and a lisp; it shames
A mouth with a beard; and don't tread mincingly:
'Tis bad enough in a woman,—what, then, in
A man! And in the act of courtesies
Give not your body such a sway, as though
It were a miracle the trunk and limbs
Did hold together; but in all your acts
Be simple and at home. You may gain much
And will lose nothing by it. Do you read?

SIR PHILIP.

Occasionally, yes—by fits and starts.

LADY ANNE.

Latin and Greek?

SIR PHILIP.

I have half forgotten them.

LADY ANNE.

Would you renew your memory there with me,
You are welcome. Call and let us read together.

SIR PHILIP.

Dear Lady Anne, how good you are ! We are friends ?

LADY ANNE.

We are !

SIR PHILIP.

Then let me seal it on your hand.
I am almost loath to go !

LADY ANNE.

Almost, no stop !
Keep ever to almost, you are safe enough.

SIR PHILIP.

I'll see what keeps my friend !

LADY ANNE.

I'll follow you !

SIR PHILIP.

Yet, ere I go, I'll kiss your hand once more !

[Goes out.

LADY ANNE.

That man has got a heart and does not know it.
Nought of himself, save what his mirror shows him,
He sees. His eyes are shut to what he is,
Therein, where lie his nobler properties ;
I'll open them and make a man of him !
Anne ! what art thou about ? Eschewest thou
His sex and hold'st companionship with him ?
In charity !—nothing more ! It would be strange
If, teaching him to woo fair Lady Blanche,
I chanced to cause him turn his eyes on me !
At the bare thought how takes my heart alarm !

Well ! can I help it, comes it to that pass ?
It is his own affair ! and touching Blanche,
No heartscald 'tis to her ! She loves him not.
My life upon it not without some cost,
Did Blanche return to sun her eyes again
I' th' blushing cheek of the young jeweller !
I wonder was it fancy, but I thought
Sir Philip blush'd on taking leave of me.
Those blushes are strange things ! Upon my life,
One cannot think of them, but one feels strangely !
Well for him he's in love with Lady Blanche,
If bad his chance with her 'twere worse with me !
And yet I doubt if love for her he feels.
Love her three years, and never once fall sick,
Lack appetite, lose sleep—sound sleep ! no dreams
To trouble it—no hurricane of sighs.
Allow another lay close siege to her
And never purse his brow, nor bite his lip,
Nor clench his hand as he could knock him down ;
He cannot be in love with Lady Blanche !

[*Goes out.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Park.

Enter ROBERT and CHARLOTTE.

ROBERT.

THIS is the place !—'Tis now almost the hour !
Now—Lady Blanche !—forget the lady's maid,
And be the Countess. Bear yourself with height ;
Incline your head in lieu of curtseying ;
And that not over-much !—Be affluent
In airs !—As many graces as you can !
Do not forget your friends, Lords John and Stephen ;
Let nothing trace them to the servants' room
That falls from thee ! And pray you keep in mind
My baronetcy !—but through all your pride
Let admiration of this coxcomb shine,
As it behoves you to be smit with him !
They come.—Now prove yourself an actress.—Mark ;
We'll pass them first, then turn.—They know their cue.

*Enter STEPHEN, JOHN, JACOB.*STEPHEN and JACOB (*as they cross*).

Good day !

ROBERT and CHARLOTTE (*very stately ; crossing and
going out*).

Good day !

JOHN (*stopping the others*).

Is that the Countess?

STEPHEN.

Don't

Look back! 'Tis not the mode. We'll turn anon,

The odds are ten to one they do the same.

[*They go out, then return; ROBERT and CHARLOTTE re-
turning at the same time—both parties come to a stand.*]

STEPHEN.

Good day again, Sir Philip.

ROBERT.

Dear Lord John,

It is, indeed, a fair and sunny day!

Lord Stephen, how are you?—Your servant, sir!

JOHN.

Mean you not to present me?

STEPHEN.

Stay awhile!

CHARLOTTE (*half aloud to ROBERT*).

A monstrous handsome person that, Sir Philip.

JOHN.

She speaks, methinks, of me!

STEPHEN and JACOB.

Be sure she does.

JOHN.

She is struck! Pray introduce me.—Nothing like
Clenching the nail at once!

STEPHEN.

My friend aspires

To know you, Lady Blanche!

CHARLOTTE.

His grace is good.

JOHN.

She takes me for a duke !—Your ladyship
O'errates, alas, my rank ! I am not a duke.

CHARLOTTE.

Alas,
Not for your lordship, but the rank which lacks
The pride of owning such an ornament.

JOHN.

She'll have me an earl, if I am not a duke.
I can't account for this !

STEPHEN.

'Tis instinct, sir !
Like natures oft find one another out !
Though yet plain gentleman, I would not say
But you're an earl or duke in embryo !

JOHN.

I have my own forebodings thereupon ;
'Twere fit I undeceived her,—were it not ?
Fair lady ! neither duke nor earl am I.

CHARLOTTE.

I must believe your looks against your words !

JOHN.

Nay, lady, trust my words against my looks !

ROBERT.

Fair Lady Blanche, 'tis even as he says ;
Afflict him not with incredulity,
For he is honest, even as well favour'd !
That noble presence—for it is, indeed,
No less than noble, as the evidence
Of feature, form, and bearing do attest—
Belongs to neither duke nor earl, but calls
A commoner its owner !

CHARLOTTE.

Do you say so?
Nor duke nor earl!—Is he a baronet?

ROBERT.

Not yet a baronet.

JOHN.

How very strong
The feeling of my quality is upon her!

CHARLOTTE.

Who is your friend, and what?

ROBERT.

Lord John, how strangely
You introduced the gentleman! I vow
You never named him; so the ceremony
Must be perform'd again! Fair Lady Blanche,
Permit me to solicit your acquaintance
For Colonel Blount.

CHARLOTTE.

For Colonel Blount!—Oh, no!

ROBERT.

Indeed! indeed!

CHARLOTTE.

I can't believe it.

ROBERT.

True
As I'm a baronet.

STEPHEN.

Or I, a lord.

JACOB.

Or I, another, or as your ladyship
Is Lady Blanche.

CHARLOTTE.

Deny me Lady Blanche,
Deny that you are lords ; Sir Philip, you
That you're a baronet ; but tell me not
That gentleman is a colonel !—Colonel ?—Fie !
Not he !

JOHN.

Does she suspect me, do you think ?
I have my fears !

ROBERT.

And so have I !

JOHN.

Indeed !
Were it not better then I stole away ?

CHARLOTTE.

A colonel ! Fie, Sir Philip—fie, Lord John,
Lord Stephen ! Play on my credulity !
Palm your friend on me for a colonel !

JOHN.

Clear
She penetrates the truth—I will be gone ;
Don't stop me, dear Sir Philip.

CHARLOTTE.

Colonel—Sir,
Are you a colonel ?

JOHN (*aside to ROBERT*).

What am I to say ?

ROBERT.

Put a bold face upon it !—Say at once
You would not contradict her !

JOHN (*stammering*).

'Twere offence

To say I am the thing your ladyship
Asserts me not to be !

CHARLOTTE.

I knew 'twas so !
I knew he was no colonel !

JOHN.

I'm undone.

CHARLOTTE.

A colonel ! does he look like one ?—Why, friends,
You cannot use your eyes ! Your friend must be
A general !

JOHN.

Give me joy ! I breathe again,
Like one half drown'd that's to the surface brought !
I thank your ladyship for giving me
So high a rank ! I am a general
In prospect !

ROBERT.

Now you'll do. Propose to walk,
And offer her your arm.

JOHN.

Let me take time,
Scarce yet can I fetch breath.

ROBERT.

Love's time is now !
It brooks not putting off ! Love's time is when
It sees 'tis welcome. So you seem to be,
And make your most of it. Surprise will take
The fort would mock a siege ! Declare yourself,
And straight propose. You know the chance faint heart
Runs with fair lady !

JOHN.

Yes.

ROBERT.

Then profit by
The adage. Sure you lack not courage.

JOHN.

Courage ?
And with a woman !—Be there anything
Wherein I have the mastery beyond
All other things, 'tis courage with a woman !
Your ladyship.

CHARLOTTE (*very stately*).

Sir !

[JOHN is thrown off his guard.]

STEPHEN.

What is she about ?

ROBERT.

Let her alone. She better knows than you.
Without a little frost, a summer comes
With half a welcome.

CHARLOTTE.

Sir ? What would you say ?
I think, or I'm deceived, you spoke just now.
Well, sir ?

JOHN (*at a loss*).

The day is marvellously fine.

CHARLOTTE.

'Tis June, sir.

JOHN.

June ! So is it ! Then the day
May well be fine without a miracle.

CHARLOTTE.

And yet for June the day is fine.

JOHN.

'Twas that
I meant to say.

CHARLOTTE.

A breezy day !

JOHN.

It is
A breezy day.

CHARLOTTE.

Though warm.

JOHN.

Though warm.

CHARLOTTE.

A day,
Methinks, to walk. Do you like walking, sir ?

[Putting her arm through his.]

JOHN.

Much, very much. It is a passion with me !
I love to walk—luxuriate in a walk !
And I walk well. So, please your ladyship,
If there's one thing wherein I most excel,
'Tis walking.

CHARLOTTE.

I should like to learn of you.

JOHN.

When ? I am ready any time.

CHARLOTTE.

Why, now ;
Since I have placed my arm—I trust with leave—
In yours.

JOHN.

Now be it then. How proud I am

To wait upon your ladyship. I live
Only to please your sex.

CHARLOTTE.

You flatter us.

JOHN.

Nay, Lady Blanche, 'tis simple honesty—
Mere honesty. If there's a quality
Whereon, above all others, I presume—

CHARLOTTE.

You need not tell me, Colonel Blount—I know—
Am sure—could swear it. It is honesty. [They go out.

SCENE II.

The Antechamber to a Ball-Room.—Enter LADY BLANCHE.

LADY BLANCHE.

He knows me not at all!—His memory,
Far as concerns me, is a perfect blank,
And in his heart not e'en a spark remains,
To mind me of the love he bore me when
I seem'd a yeoman's maid. She is forgot,
But I'll avenge her! and enslave his heart
Before he knows his danger. Twice or thrice
We spoke in passing. In his eye I saw
No witness to the charms which all allow!—
But soon shall he attest them to his cost.
He comes!—I'll hold him now in spite of him;
Find out his vulnerable part—all men
That have free hearts are somewhere vulnerable!—
Propitiate his vanity, his pride,
Humour—whate'er sways uppermost; and then
Right to his heart, and win the citadel

Which, mine, who lists may keep. — He comes! — *In thought!*

[*Enter* COLONEL BLOUNT.

Well, Colonel Blount, I saw you dance just now.

Come, sir, sit down, and tell me how you liked

Your partner, sir—a special friend of mine!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

A lady worthy praise.

LADY BLANCHE.

Did you admire

Her diamonds?—Mine are paragons to them! [*Aside.*

They are very rich!—Perhaps you do not care

For gems?—No more do I!—But what of that?

The world does! What are you and I against

The world?—I know what you would say! Oneself

May be one's world, or one may light upon

Another self outweighs the world! That self

When I shall find, farewell the world for me!

The diamonds I could prize were shining thoughts,

Mined in the heart of one that I could love!

(*Aside.*) A shaft shot straight and should go home.—He's struck!

If struck, he should be stung! The deer is charm'd!

The skill I try on him, I throw away!

I'll give it over! At the first shot? No,

The quiver yet is full. What ponders he?

(*Aloud.*) Where are your thoughts, sir?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Lady, close at hand,

Whene'er you call them to attend upon you.

LADY BLANCHE.

Attendance willing waits not to be call'd,

But still forestals the summons, still attends!

Not that I claim such servitude from one
That's but my new acquaintance ! By and by
Perhaps I may be more observed—and more
May wish to be so. There are scores of men
Who watch my looks to worm my wishes from them,
And do them ere they are told ! But what are scores
That don't include the unit which we want ?
Found I that unit, farewell scores of scores—
Nay, farewell millions ! It were more to me !
I think the day will come—nay, I believe
'Tis nearer than I thought it yesterday,
When first I made your fair acquaintance, sir !
(*Aside.*) The man 's a stock ! He cannot hear ! I 'll try
If he can see ! (*Aloud.*) Where are your thoughts again ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Here, madam, your retainers.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

Such retainers
Might wait upon my grandmother for me !
(*Aloud.*) The lady's forehead you were dancing with,
They say, a strong resemblance bears to mine.
Does it ? 'Tis not so high by half an inch (*aside*).
Well, sir ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I am thinking, madam.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

Thinking, when
He should be looking ! Where are the man's eyes ?
Poring upon his feet—and mine beside them !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I own I cannot see the likeness.

LADY BLANCHE (*aloud*).

I

Should wonder if you did ! (*Aloud.*) I do not think
Our foreheads much alike—mine, I believe,
Somewhat exceeds in height ! Do you think it does ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I think it does a little.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

Half an inch

A little in a forehead ! Pshaw ! He knows not
What he is saying ! (*Aloud.*) Sir, are you listening to me ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

With all my ears !

LADY BLANCHE.

Then all, I fear, all lack !

(*Aside.*) I will transfix him with my arms ! They say
That that same lady has surpassing arms !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

She wears surpassing bracelets !

LADY BLANCHE.

Like you not

A lady should wear bracelets ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I like nothing

Would supersede the handiwork of Nature !
Why mask the graceful wrist ? Stopp'd Nature there,
Instead of going on consummately
To the fair finish, what would you have said ?
Art is a gracious handmaid to work on,
Where her high mistress, Nature, fails ; but thence
Is a poor critic who but shames himself
Improving what's complete !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He is roused at last !

I have found his vein. He shall not nod again.

(*Aloud.*) My bracelets hurt.—The clasps are very stiff.

I pray you help me take them off ! I'll never

Wear them again.—Now, sir, your eyes are mine.

COLONEL BLOUNT (*holding her hand, and contemplating the bracelet*).

'Tis wonderful !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He perches and is limed—my saucy linnet !

How light you made just now of the poor bush,

A spray of which has caught you !

COLONEL BLOUNT (*still holding, &c.*).

Art, beat that !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

She can't !

COLONEL BLOUNT (*still holding her hand*).

Or find the thing that will comprise

Such richness in ten thousand times the space !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He has found out at last I have an arm,

We'll live in hopes he will find out anon

I have a face as well !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Why, caracks thus

Might weigh almost 'gainst kingdoms.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

Caracks !—What

Have arms to do with caracks ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Multiply
The grains of each of these a thousand fold,
And let the bulk grow with them, you will have
The income of an empire in the space
That spans this little wrist !

LADY BLANCHE.

Mean you my diamonds?
Sir, you were 'prentice to a lapidary !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I know I was.

LADY BLANCHE.

Then, having left your craft,
You should forget it.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

'Twas an honest one ;
And, though I loved it not, I blush not for it !

LADY BLANCHE.

What kind of man is this?—I am forgetful ! (*Aside.*)
I have been ungenerous and ask your pardon !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Pardon !—O no !—impossible !—a lady
Must never ask for pardon !

LADY BLANCHE.

You forgive me ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I will when you offend me !

LADY BLANCHE.

Then we are friends.

COLONEL BLOUNT

Then I am happy !

LADY BLANCHE.

You are a soldier, sir.
Tell me of your exploits. I love brave men,
And hear their deeds with pleasure.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Had I deeds
To speak of, I had rather others told them.

LADY BLANCHE.

Come, sir, what is a battle?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Glory, madam,
In a just cause, but at the best bought dearly
When men destroy their brother men, like them
Framed in the image of their common Maker!

LADY BLANCHE.

You would fight again?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I would, to serve my country ;
But should be glad she needed not such service.
We must have wars, if others will provoke us,
And ever then, I trust, act gallantly,
As men that loathe aggression!—but, I hope,
That golden age will come—'tis promised us,
When men will fear their God and live like men,
To brutes resigning carnage.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He o'ertowers me
In all he thinks and feels!—I grow to fear him!
He has his weaknesses!—who is without them?
I'll find them out!—he is nothing but a man!
Soldiers live merrily, they say, in quarters—
Aloud.) You don't refuse your glass!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Nor yet abuse it ;
Unless, perhaps, a joyous time or two
When men make holiday, and open hearts
Would shut at my defection—yet e'en then,
Keep somewhat within compass !—Do believe me,
And for my credit press me not too closely.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

How honest is he ! if I prove him further,
I almost fear to find myself a knave !
Yet I 'll go on ! (*Aloud.*)—Soldiers, I have heard, love play.
You play ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

At times ; and then for the suspense
That chance creates—that mistress none can fix,
Who from the sharper's clasp escapes as well
As his who woos her with fair gallantry !
I never gamble.

LADY BLANCHE.

How can you refrain ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

With thought of what a paltry act it is !
To say the least, it never can consist
With proper manhood to enjoy the thing
Was not one's own an hour ago, and accord
Not his own merit now has won him ! then,
To wax rich by another's poverty !
My pillow for the sleep it giveth me
To rob another man's !—How could I lay
My head upon it ?—when I feast, the bread
That loads my board, to leave another's bare,
Ay of a crust perhaps !—How could I touch it ?
To go abroad and show the witness sun

My fullness, at such destitution bought
As robs that sun of light and heat to one
Who yesterday rejoiced in them and bless'd them !
Can he who games have feeling?—yes, he may !—
But better in my mind he had it not !
For I esteem him preferable far,
In rate of manhood, that has not a heart
Than he that has, and makes vile use of it !
The one is traitor unto nature, which
The other can't be called !—Were it my lot
In some unguarded moment of caprice,
Forgetfulness, or aught that renders one
Unlike oneself—were it, in such a lapse,
My lot to win a fortune—ere I slept
I must disgorge my gains, that the next day
I might awake a man !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He is a man !
Where am I?—What am I about? I fear
I have found a master where I sought a slave.
Heigho !—methinks I could look up to him,
Give him obedience, would he in exchange
Give me his heart !—But is it his to give?
I'll try, yet fear to try !—(*Aloud.*) Soldiers are lovers ?
Some men are women-haters—are you one ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I honour women.

LADY BLANCHE.

But I spoke of loving !
Say all men love; yet, love not all alike.
Some men love lightly, others seriously,
Some last, some change—which way of these love you ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Indeed, you puzzle me !

LADY BLANCHE.

You are afraid
To answer !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

No !—If you will take my answer—
I love for ever—if I love at all !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

I see !—He never loved the yeoman's maid.
(*Aloud.*) What call you loving ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Blissful cherishing !
Of our own happiness that makes a casket
Wherein to keep a treasured other's safe !
He who loves lightly does not love at all,
He only thinks he loves !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

So loved he when
He loved the yeoman's maid !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

There is more of Heaven
In that sweet mood than such a man e'er dream'd of !
Love lightly !—Love is nothing, if its root
Pierces the surface only of the heart !
It must dive to the core, then what will pluck it out
With fibres so embedded ! It may happen
The object is forgetful ; but what then,
If 'tis found out too late ?—The soil hath given
Its richest spirits to the growth.—'Tis spent !—
I don't believe that heart can love again !
I am sure it cannot !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

He will steal my heart
Before my face, and all against my will,
Nor give me hold of his.—I must break off
This converse ! (*Aloud.*) Sir, I thank you for the time
You have wasted on me ! We have talk'd of trifles,
But pleasantly—nay, very pleasantly !
You are going ? A good night—a kind good night.
I am glad of your acquaintance—will shake hands
If you please ! I have tired you, have I not ?—Don't answer ;
I know you must deny.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I do so frankly.

LADY BLANCHE.

I thank you frankly then, and so good night.

[COLONEL BLOUNT *goes out*.

How changed I feel !—I do not know myself !
Changed !—He shall change. I'll bring him to his knee !
I wonder what he thinks of me ?—I'll plan
A snare for him shall show me.—He did not kiss
My hand !—and, when I gave it him, almost
I held it to his lips !—One thing is certain,
The yeoman's maid is free to love for him !
How I deceived myself, to think one moment
The man was any other than a man !
How very soon I have disabused myself !
To-morrow shall unfold !—not kiss my hand !
I could have sworn he would have kiss'd my hand !

[*Goes out.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

The House of LADY ANNE.—A Room.

Enter LADY ANNE.

LADY ANNE.

HE thrives beyond my hopes ! Leave an old maid
Alone to make a man, reforming him
After the fashion likes her. Women prate
Who talk of conquest, while they stoop to love !
What's sway for sway, but mere equality
Wherein the party least deserves to rule—
And that, past all dispute, is man, the lord !—
Ne'er rests till he disturbs the perfect poise,
Into his own scale throws his might—that good
Wherein the brute hath mastery o'er him—
And to the beam heaves up the counter one,
To hang there at his will !—Had women but
The thews of men ! My very girlhood solved
The riddle of their sovereignty !—Brought up
With two male cubs of cousins, was not I
A likely one the relative deserts
Of women and of men to put to proof ?
And didn't I ?—I beat them to a stand !
We started all together ! Where were they
When I could read ?—Why, in the spelling-book !
When I was in subtraction, where were they ?

A cudgelling their brains to cast a sum
Of ten lines in addition ! I could rhyme
My tables backwards, while they fought with pounds,
Shillings and pence, that kept the upper hand
And laugh'd at them for masters ! I could parse,
While they on footing of most shy acquaintance
Kept with their parts of speech ! In one thing only
I found I met my betters—and e'en there
I tried them, though I came off second best—
I could not beat them when they quarrell'd with me !
Because they held my hands !—They were afraid
'To fight me !—But Sir Philip thrives apace,
And all of my performing !—And what pains
He takes to please me, with his air, his gait,
His dress, and most of all his books ! How fond
He is of study ! I'll do all I can
To encourage him !—At last, he'll make a man !

Enter JANE.

Well, Jane.

JANE.

One asks to see your ladyship,
Whose forward manners call his years most backward.
He looks but twenty, may you trust his chin,
But should be thirty and no minute wasted.
He told his will, nor gave me time to answer,
But, making of his arms a pillory,
Began to kiss me, madam ! Smack on smack,
Quick as the clapper of the 'larum bell
That ne'er gives o'er before the weight is down,
Like him who still held on till out of breath !

LADY ANNE.

Hadst not a tongue, girl, to let loose upon him ?

JANE.

I had, my lady ; but my lips were stopp'd.

LADY ANNE.

But when your lips were free !

JANE.

The harm was done !

LADY ANNE.

I will not see him !

JANE.

He is at the door !

LADY ANNE.

Shut it ! Go ring the bell !

LADY BLANCHE (*entering disguised as a man*).

And if she does,

I'll ring the changes on her lips again.

LADY ANNE.

Go call my footman !

LADY BLANCHE.

If she bears them spite,—

For I shall trounce them soundly, if they come ;

I'll ring the bell ; but mark the consequence,

Footmen or maids, I'll kiss you spite of them,

Before their faces ! Be they maids that come,

I'll kiss the maids as well.—You see my mood ;

So, be you squeamish, take me by yourself

And leave the bell alone !

JANE.

Shall I ring, my lady ?

LADY ANNE.

No, don't !

LADY BLANCHE.

You hear !—You mark ?—You know your cue !

You have not been yon lady's maid in vain ?
You're of no use !—Why loiter here ?—Begone !

LADY ANNE.

I can command my maid myself !

LADY BLANCHE.

You can !
But better now that I command than you,
For on rebellion clearly is she bent,
Seeing her absence leaves us two alone !
By all the arrows ever Cupid shot,
By all the hearts that ever rued his bow,
Thou art jealous of thy mistress !

JANE.

Sir !

LADY BLANCHE.

Thou art !
Thou wouldst we still were standing in the hall ;
Thou wouldst my errand there were still to tell ;
Thou wouldst the vails I gave thee in advance
Were still to pay—yea, thou wouldst give them back
To have them paid again ! I am willing—but
There is a time—there is a place—and this
Is neither place, nor time—avoid thee, then !
For, were my love the freight of twenty men,
Yet of one man I cannot well make two,
And though the lady's beauty tracks the maid's,
Yet must the lady's self precedence take !
So, Fondness !—leave the room !—Nay then—

JANE (*retreating from* LADY BLANCHE).

I am gone !

[*Goes out.*]

LADY ANNE.

How wrong may thrive by sheer audacity,

While, with amaze, propriety gives way
Before the thing she scorns !

LADY BLANCHE.

Give me a kiss !

LADY ANNE.

A kiss !—I never yet gave kiss to man !

LADY BLANCHE.

You have kiss'd me many a time ! Women forget
Their girlhood days ! Their lofty age o'erlooks
Such tiny things !

LADY ANNE.

Kiss'd thee !

LADY BLANCHE.

When we have stroll'd
Along green lanes in honeysuckle time,
With thrilling throats mocking the merry birds ;
When we have chased each other 'mong the sheaves,
Whose ears have lent us gold to make us crowns ;
When, forced to keep the house in winter, of
Our plays we have made fires to warm ourselves ;
Or when we have coax'd spring on with primroses,
Till hedge-rows leaved, and trees were all a-bloom !
I have kiss'd thee all these times, not to recount
How often we have sat on the same chair,
Or made a chair of one another's lap
On the same carpet roll'd—slept in one bed !

LADY ANNE (*shrieks*).

Ah !

LADY BLANCHE.

You may shriek.—There was no shrieking then—
In short, were comates more than hand or glove,
For still were we together !—Kiss me, Anne !

LADY ANNE.

Ho! help!

LADY BLANCHE.

Why, don't you know me, simpleton?

LADY ANNE.

Blanche!

LADY BLANCHE (*bowing*).

At your service.

LADY ANNE.

What may this forebode?

LADY BLANCHE.

Why, victory! I cannot tell thee now!
I came to put my masquerade to proof!

LADY ANNE.

'Tis excellent!

LADY BLANCHE.

And so, in verity
You took me for a man!

LADY ANNE.

In verity.

LADY BLANCHE.

The dress becomes me?—Eh?

LADY ANNE.

To admiration!

LADY BLANCHE.

Is not my carriage very like a man's?
Have I not caught his tyrant strut?

LADY ANNE.

You have!

LADY BLANCHE.

The style with which he bears his empty head?

LADY ANNE.

You have !

LADY BLANCHE.

His frown when he would scare a man ?

LADY ANNE.

You have.

LADY BLANCHE.

His smile when he would please a woman ?

LADY ANNE.

You have.

LADY BLANCHE.

When thus I poise me on one foot,
Planting at ease the other, with one hand
In my breast, the other at my side, with arm
Akimbo, say you were not in my secret,
Would you not take your oath I was a man ?

LADY ANNE.

I would !

LADY BLANCHE.

'Twill do ! Kiss me, dear Anne, again !

LADY ANNE.

I hear a step.

LADY BLANCHE.

Keep quiet, will you, Anne !

JANE (*running on*).

Madam—O la !

[*Stopping short at seeing LADY ANNE with her head on
LADY BLANCHE'S shoulder, while LADY BLANCHE
kisses her.*]

LADY BLANCHE.

How envy stops her breath !

You need not go—we do not mind you—well !

Your errand—if you have one ? Much I doubt

'Twas jealousy that brought you back again !

LADY ANNE (*still lolling on* LADY BLANCHE).
What is it, Jane?

LADY BLANCHE.
You see we're quite at home
With one another. Well, what is it, sweetheart?

JANE.
Sir Philip Brilliant waits to see my lady.

LADY BLANCHE.
Show him up stairs.

JANE.
Well, if I ever dream'd—

LADY BLANCHE.
She scarce can move for very spite—Begone!

[JANE goes out.]

LADY ANNE.
What shall be done?

LADY BLANCHE.
Done?—Let them show him up!
I am sure I make as good a man as he is!
How changed Sir Philip is!—How grave he grows!
I half believe my empire there is done!—
Why staid you yester evening from the ball?—
I ne'er saw man so alter'd as Sir Philip!
He thinks! He does! Looks pensive, as I live!
What brings him here, dear Anne?

LADY ANNE (*hesitating*).
To learn of me
How to make love to you.

LADY BLANCHE.
Learn to make love
To me! How long since you have open'd school?

You ne'er gave lesson on that art before !
 But wit does wonders on emergency !—
 Anne !—They say teachers learn the while they teach !
 Take care !—Amercy, where's your old maid's dress ?
 What do you teach Sir Philip ?

LADY ANNE.

We read Latin
 Together.

LADY BLANCHE.

Anne !—I can translate your Latin
 Better than you can. Here your pupil comes !

[Enter SIR PHILIP.]

An o'ergrown boy, methinks, to go to school !
 But such a one, if once he takes to tasks,
 Makes progress.—Pays he thee in coin or kind ?
 Coin !—No such item in the schedule broad
 Of love's estate, composed of things as light
 As sunshine !—air !—the odour air exhales !
 The softest sound it lends its limber wing !
 Not that it always, yet, escheweth things
 More tangible, begot of hands and lips !
 Farewell ! I never saw so clear a dawn !

LADY ANNE.

Dawn ? It is day.

LADY BLANCHE.

'Tis dawn will grow to day !
 I tell thee, Anne, twas e'en Aurora's self
 That now I spied—that early, modest maid
 Who opes the curtains of the sleeping sun,
 And, blushing, flies his gaze ! Permit my lips
 To press your hand.—Now, mark my bow ! (*Aside.*) Adieu !

[LADY BLANCHE bows to SIR PHILIP,
and goes out.]

SIR PHILIP (*uneasily*).

A handsome youth !

LADY ANNE.

Umph ! Well enough !

SIR PHILIP.

He seems

An old acquaintance, for he kiss'd your hand
Right lovingly !

LADY ANNE.

I have known him rather long.

SIR PHILIP.

I would I had not come !

LADY ANNE.

Why, prithee ?

SIR PHILIP.

As

My call was out of time.

LADY ANNE.

Not so, Sir Philip,
The gentleman was just about to go.

SIR PHILIP.

I am glad I came not sooner.

LADY ANNE.

Had you, sir,
'Twere all the same to me—except the pleasure
Of seeing you had been some minutes older !

SIR PHILIP.

You make me happy.

LADY ANNE.

What's the matter with him ?
Sir Philip cannot be in love with me !
Yet Lady Blanche would so insinuate—

Hang her ! to note my cheek !—It had not burn'd
Except through her !—Why, what a world it is !
What wicked thoughts come into people's heads !
Behoves I watch myself !—We meet too often !
We are too much alone—O far too much !
His tasks must end, if he begins to love !
He has not told me so !—I'll wait till then !
I wonder, was he pensive as she said,
Or did she fancy it ? Sir Philip.

SIR PHILIP.

Madam ?

LADY ANNE.

I pray you, how went off the ball last night ?

SIR PHILIP.

Oh, admirably well !

LADY ANNE.

I knew it ! She
Was jesting ! I hate jests ! Nine times in ten
They are out of season ! 'Twas a pleasant evening ?

SIR PHILIP.

Very !

LADY ANNE.

I knew it !—What can change a man
In a moment !—Can he doff himself as soon
As his coat ? The days of miracles are over !
And so you pass'd a very pleasant evening ?
Whom danced you with—the Countess ?

SIR PHILIP.

Nobody.

LADY ANNE.

You play'd at cards—who was your partner ? She ?

SIR PHILIP.

No one !

LADY ANNE.

They gave you music ?—You can sing,
I have heard you sing a second to the Countess.
A capital second !—I was pleased with it.
That am not mov'd with trifles !—Did you sing
Last night together ?

SIR PHILIP.

No ; I sang with no one.

LADY ANNE.

A solo then ?

SIR PHILIP.

I did not sing at all !

LADY ANNE.

Singing is very well in its way ; but many
Love conversation better.

SIR PHILIP.

Very many !

LADY ANNE.

For mine own part, give me a corner, with
A friend I love to talk with, and the song
May hold its peace for me !

SIR PHILIP.

I feel as you do !

LADY ANNE.

The Countess can talk well.

SIR PHILIP.

Surprisingly—

LADY ANNE.

When she likes it. Was she in the vein last night ?

SIR PHILIP.

I did not note!—I saw not much of her.
I was not in the vein for company.

LADY ANNE.

pray you, Sir Philip, who were at the ball?

SIR PHILIP.

Upon my word, I scarce remember who!
I better could recal who was not there!

LADY ANNE.

Who was not there?

SIR PHILIP.

Why, you!

LADY ANNE.

That sounds like love!
'Tis well I be upon my guard in time!
Repel the foe before he can make head!
Yet to be like a thing, is not to be
The thing itself! It may not, yet, be love.
The enemy I take up arms against
Myself may conjure up!—alarums sound,
Where no attack is meant—That would be hard
On him!—to lose, without a crime, the friend
He stands so much in need of—then the credit
I must forego, if I forego the task
I took in hand, to make a man of him!
See how he cons his lesson like a boy!
Get the desk ready—I shall follow you.

SIR PHILIP.

Here is a passage, like to master me.
Each word I know, yet can't divine the sense!

LADY ANNE.

Show it me. Dear Sir Philip, you forget
Your syntax! Here is an ellipsis, sir!

SIR PHILIP.

An ellipsis?

LADY ANNE.

Yes; look at that genitive!

It stands alone! What governs it, Sir Philip?

SIR PHILIP.

The noun is understood!—I have found the sense;
Yet wits, more quick, miss seeing things as plain!

LADY ANNE.

What does he mean?

SIR PHILIP.

The want is profit to me,
Of such instructress put me so in need,
I progress!—Will gets through a heap of work!
Dear Lady Anne, I love to read with you! [Goes out.

LADY ANNE.

He loves to read with me! were it charity
If that I construed into loving me?
He stands too much in awe of me to love me!
But, say he does—what business is 't of mine?
Let him look to it—I have not the fever,
He caught it not from me. I'm in sound health,
Was never half so well! my mind sees clearer!
My heart feels lighter. I am twice myself——
He loves not any one!—or if he does,
'Tis clear as open day 'tis not the Countess! [Goes out.

SCENE II.

COLONEL BLOUNT'S *House.—A Room.*

Enter COLONEL BLOUNT.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Mine honour'd parents have I seen at last !
Received their welcome, with their blessing crown'd !
My brother mocks my search—and so does she
Whom to have lost, makes loss of fortune's gains.
Nor hope nor clue to hope ! The house whereat
We used to meet hath other tenant got,
The former gone they know not whither ; if
Alive or dead ! For hours and hours I walk
The streets in vain ! she never crosses me.
I light on all the world but her I seek !

Enter WILLIAM.

WILLIAM.

A gentleman would speak with you.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

His name ?

WILLIAM.

I ask'd his name, and in reply he told me
Again his errand—wonder'd how my master
Could keep a male attendant at his door,
And maids to hire in bunches !—any one
Of whom could draw the bolt as well !—would look
A thousand times more pleasing—speak more sweetly,
And, maybe, when a pretty fellow call'd

With kisses season answers—then with a stamp
Dismiss'd me.

LADY BLANCHE (*entering still disguised*).

Colonel Blount, your humble servant !
Place chairs ! excuse the freedom ! I am at home
Whene'er I light upon a gentleman,
And you, I know, are one !—You know your place, sir,
And know, of course, the way to it—which, as
I take it, is the hall !—you understand me ?
The hall ! (WILLIAM *goes out*.) Your servant, Colonel
Blount, again !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

You know me, sir ?

LADY BLANCHE.

A man beloved of fame, sir,
Is known to many who are strange to him.
I own that I make bold ; but keep your frown
Until I give my reason. Colonel Blount,
Some men make bold through fear, some through the lack on't.
Some to seem honest—for the adage runs,
That knavery puts on a glossy suit
While honesty goes rough !—and some make bold
Through lightness of dear hearts and wantonness
Of healthy frankness !—I am such a man !
To free your mind at once from jealousy,
If not to win your confidence, I tell you
I wait on you—touching a lady, sir !—
He takes it very coolly (*aside*). Colonel Blount
I wait on you, touching a lady, sir !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I heard you, sir—I am not deaf.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

As well
Be deaf as dull. The lady, sir, I am sure,
By certain signs affects you—and, aware
How through reserve, or self-mistrust, or something,
Hearts form'd to mingle oft miss one another,
And being of the lady's blood partaker,
And knowing you, by fame, a man of honour,
The secret I have guess'd, sir, I have come
To tell you, sir.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Well, sir?

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

The man's a stock!
"Well, sir!"—shall I go on? I will!—but only
Because I have begun. Whom reckon you
The beauty of the court?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

The beauty?

LADY BLANCHE (*off her guard*).

Well?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Your patience, sir, I am not skill'd in beauty;
Perhaps I may mistake.

LADY BLANCHE (*again off her guard*).

You do not know
The beauty of the court?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

To say the truth
I lay light value upon beauty only.
Then is it hard to say what beauty is.
You like the Roman outline, I the Grecian—
Where's beauty? Beauty, may I trust report,
Hath somewhat questionable reputation, too!

Some say it is intolerably proud ;
Some, empty—full of nothing but itself ;
Some, by no means good temper'd—some assert
'Tis mercenary and not over honest :
This may, in part, be spleen, but part is truth.
Whence am I jealous of what men call beauty,
And own it—but when beauty, modestly,
Attends the mind, like a fair handmaiden
Who knows her place, and serves a noble mistress,
Then could I worship beauty, sir ; for then
Its proper worth not only doffs no favour,
But wins enhancement from the worth it waits on !

LADY BLANCHE.

Had you not, Colonel Blount, some time or other
A falling out with beauty ? Come ! You had ;
She slighted you one time—I know she did !
But 'twas your own fault—I 'll be bound it was !
You did not manage well, sir. You were proud—
Lack'd patience—maybe, art—and never dreaming
That beauty's smiles go oft in masquerade,
Took one for a frown, and off !—when, had you tarried,
The thing you thought a frown had proved a smile,
As the dull morning breeds the sunny day.
I know the sex : there is not one of them
But 's art in something !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Do not say, not one !

LADY BLANCHE (*forgetting herself*).

I say, not one ! What know you of the sex ?
What knows this man—that man—or any man—
Of the sex ? Is it not plain to all the world,
A girl at fifteen is in wit a woman !

And what's a man at twenty but a boy ?
When I was only thirteen—

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Sir !—

LADY BLANCHE.

Nay, sir,
Don't interrput me !—When I was but thirteen—(*recovering*
I had an aunt who loved me passing well, *herself.*)
And lest I should be overmatch'd by women,
School'd me in all their arts.—You never had
An aunt like her, nor any other man,
Whence I disparaged you—I beg your pardon !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

'Tis granted freely.

LADY BLANCHE.

I am beholden to you ;
And, more to be so, would entreat you own,
If when I challenged you to name just now
The beauty of the court, you entertain'd not
Suspicion of the lady ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Not the least !

LADY BLANCHE.

Why, Colonel Blount, you are not blind ! You know
Who has the fairest skin, the finest hair—
The finest features, finest shoulders, arms
And wrists, and hands.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Stop, sir !

LADY BLANCHE.

I meant to stop,
For if by these you fail to recognise her,
The lady's waist, her ancles, and her feet
Were thrown away upon you !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I but stopp'd you
To say I know the Countess, Lady Blanche !

LADY BLANCHE.

Well, sir ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Well, sir ?

LADY BLANCHE.

I come on her account.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

You were welcome, sir, upon your own account !
Your pleasure ?

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

I could brain him, so I could !

(*Aloud*) She is the lady whom I spoke of, sir !—(*Aside*) Oh, marble ! is it true you see and hear !

I 'll speak out plainly ! (*Aloud*) Sir, I think 'tis time
The Countess married ?—What think you ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Indeed

I never thought about it !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

I could sell him

To slavery !—'Tis a fine lion, though,

Of which I 'd give my eyes to have the taming !

(*Aloud*) I think 'tis time a woman marries when
She takes a fancy to a man !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

That plight,

Methinks, can scarce befall the Countess, sir !

The lady is enamour'd of herself !

She cannot love another !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

I could be

The death of him. (*Aloud*) What would you wager, now,

She is not in love with you? You know the signs
A woman is in love? She has them all, sir!
Thinks much, speaks little, sighs incontinently,
Falls off in appetite, hates company,
Shuns pleasure, loves to pass the time alone,
Makes of one hand a pillow for her cheek,
One for her heart of the other—sitting thus
For hours together!—Is not that the picture
Of one in love? And if you come to tears,
She could weep rivers, would she—but give me
The drop, could turn into a flood—but won't,
Hangs on the lid as though 'twould fall—but doesn't;
Seems as 'twould ever stay there, but is gone
You know not how nor whither!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

You surprise me!
I saw the Countess at the ball last night—
Look'd never woman better!

LADY BLANCHE.

Look'd!—

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I know
She paints.

LADY BLANCHE.

Paints, sir?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

She does! 'Tis clear
As that she breathes and moves.

LADY BLANCHE.

Does that offend you?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Sir, I'll be frank! I love not simulation,
Nor can believe it may be practised safely

E'en in as small a thing as that we speak of!
'Tis well when she who paints confesses it ;
Yet she confesses vanity besides,
Which is not well. But, for the other sort,
Women who pass a cheek for what it is not ;
I always fear'd the probity, within,
Would follow that without ; and thoughts and words
Might wear a hue that was not native to them.
For, if one fraud will blast a character,
What follows but that honesty is perfect,
Or nothing?—holds throughout?—is everywhere
Or nowhere?—I refer to actions!—'Tis
Their actions which determine what men are!
Whate'er of me men see must be myself ;
What I myself do see—I do not mean
To advertise my heart—that is no man's duty—
I have my weakness I'm not bound to own—
Before it masters me!—but, by my honour,
I take no credit for the grace I have not !

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

'Tis a strange man!—a man of a new species!
(*Aloud*) Well, sir, she paints!—What else?—What other
fault

Do you find with her face? Her colour you dispute,—
Perhaps you'll grant her eyes to be her own,
And they are counted fine ones !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

They are bold ones !

LADY BLANCHE.

Bold ones!—You do not like their fire perhaps?
You should not, could it scorch you ! (*Aside.*)

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Not their fire
Do I complain of. 'Tis the mood that lights it
I quarrel with!

LADY BLANCHE.

What mood? (*Aside*) I grow to hate him!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

The mood of the coquette—whom on my honour
I hold 'mongst women an anomaly!
For, much as you disparaged woman now,
Making her creature more or less of art!
I think, if not in her, then nowhere else
Is truthful nature found; for she is framed
Of elements she needs not blush to own,
Being of the temper less of earth than heaven!
And which, perforce, establish her sincere—
Pitiful—modest—and, surpassing all,
Single in love, which is Heaven's prototype!
Her love is love! Therein she is a barque
Sea-worthy 'gainst all weathers! likelier
Than any prow that ever quitted port
To make her voyage, whatso'er the wind,
And, if it blows, to ride the tempest through!

LADY BLANCHE.

He is not so bad! How handsome look'd he now,
More than his features warrant him, as though
The charm of beauty lay not in the face!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Now, what has a coquette to such a being
Pertaining? Form and feature! Nothing more!
Of woman the least part! She cannot love;

For woman, loving, cannot breathe, or move,
Or think, or feel, but love's in all she does !
And, saying that she cannot love, say what
She can do, to her honour will redound ?
I know not, sir ; do you ?

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

Yes ; she can hate,
And heartily.—Why, what a fright I took
For a good-looking man !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

The Countess now—

LADY BLANCHE.

So please you, we shall speak no more about her !
(*Aside.*) I wonder is he smit with any other—
(*Aloud.*) Excuse a question, Sir !—Are you in love ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Yes, sir, I am—but love, I fear, in vain.

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

In vain ? Some prude perhaps has snared his heart.
I hope she has ! (*Aloud.*) Is not your love return'd ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I know not !—I would fain believe it was.

LADY BLANCHE.

Believe it was ?—What ! dropp'd she never word
That Hope could make a meal of ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Never.—Silence

Was still her answer when I press'd my suit.

LADY BLANCHE.

A prude, as I'm alive ! a thorough prude !
I know what kind of maid your mistress is !

She keeps you at great distance ! plucks away
Her hand, if you press it—if you strive to keep
Her waist in durance, sets the measure of
The room 'twixt you and her ; and would you kiss her,
Prepares to shriek !—You should make trial of her !
She understands your humour ! I'll be bound
It is a prude you love !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

You wrong her, sir !
She is no prude ! No freedom you have named
I ever took with her, or dared to take !

LADY BLANCHE.

Or dared to take ! I told you, Colonel Blount,
You knew not women. Dragons, sir, are fables :
So used my aunt to say, and she went further ;
Where'er you think you see one, set it down
'Tis whalebone work and buckram ; which, without
The fear of sting or flame, you may engage,
And find more peace than there did threaten fury !
Dear Colonel Blount, you love a prude, and think
You have found a miracle of modesty !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

No more, sir !

LADY BLANCHE.

Colonel Blount, you love a prude !
'Tis ever thus with men particular ;
Men that in squeamishness would outdo women !
That knit a brow at this, and shrug at that,
Take shocks at horrors that amount to nothing ;
Whom nothing will content except perfection,
Which when at last they find,—they find they are losers
By many a better thing they met before,

And pass'd in chase of it! I give you joy, sir,
To love a prude.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Nay, sir—

LADY BLANCHE.

Yea, sir; a prude!
I see her!—She's before me!—Just the eyes,
I know she has! the use she makes of them!—
How fond they are of the ground! I warrant you,
Her thoughts are not of their taste!—Gentle primness!
There is a mouth after your own chaste fancy!
Look at the lips, how they hug one another,
Like innocents that cling at thought of parting!—
If I were near them!—What a sober cheek!
Durst ever laughter come there?—I'll be bound
When 'tis alone or keeping company
With one that understands it! Colonel Blount,
I'll court your mistress, and I'll carry her
In a week! She is a prude, fair Colonel Blount!

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Hold, sir!—On no account that bears not proof
Asperse the character of her I love!
Say that I boast because I think her fair,
She can spare beauty, 'tis her least desert!
But when in wantonness you doubt her heart,
Wherein do I in seriousness confide,
Which to her beauty is, what to the earth
The sun!—the radiant fountain, gives it light;
You tax my patience past what it can bear,
And all the man in me is up in arms!

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

'Tis plain he loves—and oh! how well he loves!

What is't to me ! I feel a sickness which
I never felt before ! The world I'd give
To see the woman that has conquer'd him ;
I would I were away !—My feigned part
I have play'd too long, can scarce keep up and wish,
And heartily, I ne'er had play'd at all !
Up heart and bear me through !—(*Aloud.*) Good day, fair sir,
I thank you for the audience you've vouchsafed !
But wish you had not loved a prude !

COLONEL BLOUNT (*drawing*).

'Sdeath, sir !

LADY BLANCHE (*alarmed*).

Stop !—(*recovering*) draw upon me under your own roof !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I am corrected ! You must pardon me ;
But, to keep patience, I must quit the room.

LADY BLANCHE.

Farewell, sir—but, believe me, you will find
The lady is a prude !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Away, sir !

[*Goes out.*]

LADY BLANCHE.

Prude !

Jilt, shrew, whate'er she is, would I were she !

[*Goes out.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The House of LADY ANNE.

Enter JANE and LADY BLANCHE.

LADY BLANCHE.

AT home to me! Why not at home to all?
What ails her? Is she ill? When saw she last
Sir Philip?

JANE.

Yesterday.

LADY BLANCHE.

He was not here
To-day? They have quarrell'd. She's in love with him.
I thought 'twould come to this. Play governess
To a pupil with a beard! Pore cheek-by-cheek
Over a book with him! A score to one
The cheeks would meet. I wonder, then, the odds
The lips would keep asunder.

JANE.

You have guess'd it.

LADY BLANCHE.

He kiss'd her? How know you?

JANE.

I saw it, madam,
Entering the study unawares. Their backs
Were towards me: they were sitting side by side

Before the reading-desk, and as I oped
The door he kiss'd her. She was on her feet
In a moment.

LADY BLANCHE.

At the kiss or at the door.

JANE.

I'll not be positive.

LADY BLANCHE.

But you can guess.
Or if you cannot I can.—She turn'd round,
And then she quarrell'd with the kiss—Go to!
You have made mischief. 'Twere a sinless kiss
Had not you look'd upon it. Get you gone,
You have wicked eyes! Go send your lady to me.

[JANE goes out.]

My heart is gone! The symptoms yesterday
I feign'd, I feel to-day. To mock, to catch,
So runs the saying, and 'tis true. I mock'd—
Dissembled love for the young 'prentice boy,
And what I pass'd before for, now I am.
A maid indeed in love—in love with him
Who having leap'd the pale that bade him dwell
Aloof from gentle blood were now my match;
But he has all forgot the yeoman's maid.

[LADY BLANCHE sits disconsolately. Enter LADY ANNE, who draws a chair beside her, and likewise sits.]

LADY ANNE.

Well, Blanche.

LADY BLANCHE.

Well, Anne. You have quarrell'd with Sir Philip.

LADY ANNE.

And you have lost your pains with Colonel Blount.

LADY BLANCHE.

We have play'd our cards like fools.

LADY ANNE.

I fear we have.

LADY BLANCHE.

I know we have. My game is gone.

LADY ANNE.

And so

I fear is mine.

LADY BLANCHE.

Why, Anne, you're not in love?

LADY ANNE.

I doubt I am. Are you in love, dear Blanche?

LADY BLANCHE.

I know I am. What could possess you, Anne,
To set yourself up at an age like yours
For an old maid? Would you be wiser than
Your mother was? Had she been of your mind,
Where had you been?

LADY ANNE.

What could possess you, Anne,
To give me credit for't, and you yourself
A woman? Think you there was ever one
Who led a life of single blessedness,
And with her will? You did forget your mother
As well as I. Children had better take
Example from their parents; they are copies
More like to spoil than mend by altering.

LADY BLANCHE.

My mother was a wife at twenty-four.

Past that, I'm like to be no wife at all.
This comes of scorning men. How could you think
Women were e'er design'd to live without them ?
Look at men's trades—no woman e'er could follow.
A pretty smith you'd make, to blow a bellows
And set an anvil ringing with a hammer.

LADY ANNE.

Or you a pretty mason, with a mallet
Shaping a block of freestone with a chisel !

LADY BLANCHE.

You could not be a doctor, nor a surgeon.

LADY ANNE.

Nor you a lawyer—would you wear the wig ?

LADY BLANCHE.

I'd starve first. You would never make a sailor.

LADY ANNE.

Nor you a soldier.

LADY BLANCHE.

I could fight. I'd like
To fight with Colonel Blount.

LADY ANNE.

What ! has he chafed you ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Mortally ! Of my beauty made as light
As 'twere a dress would only wear a day !
Averr'd I painted, which, although I did,
Designing not to show, how durst he see ?
Denied that I had eyes. Have I not eyes ?
Call'd me coquette, anatomised me so,
My heart is all one mortifying sore,
Rankling with pain, which, 'gainst all equity,
I pay him for with love, instead of hate.

LADY ANNE.

Why, Blanche, can it be you ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Can you believe

That love could be constrain'd ? That one could love
Against one's will ? That one could spite one's self
To love another ? Love and hate at once ?
I could kill Colonel Blount—could hack him up !
Make mincemeat of him—and could kill myself
For thinking I could do it, he is so full
Of wisdom, goodness, manliness, and grace !
I honour him, admire him, yea, affect him ;
Yet more than him affect the 'prentice boy,
Whose blushing cheek attested for his heart
That love was an unknown, unlook'd-for guest,
Ne'er entertain'd before, and greeted, now,
With most confused, overpow'red welcome !

LADY ANNE.

You loved the 'prentice boy !—you thought not that
Before.

LADY BLANCHE.

Because it seem'd too slight for thought.
A spark I did not heed, because a spark !
Never suspected 'twould engender flame
That kept in secret kindling, nor was found
Before the blaze that now keeps raging on,
As from the smother springs the fiercest fire.

LADY ANNE.

Well ! make confession to him.

LADY BLANCHE.

Make my will

And die ! He loves no more. The fire is out !

Vanish'd !—the very embers blown away !—
The memory even of my features gone,
At sight of which it burst with such a glare
As crimson'd all the welkin of his face,
And mock'd, as you would think, extinguishing !
Nor rests it there—another fire is lit
And blazes to another deity !
There is the altar burn'd before for me,
But to another does the incense rise.
There is the temple where I once was shrined,
But to another's image sacred now ;
And mine profaned, unbased, cast down, cast out,
Never to know its worshipper again !

LADY ANNE.

Thou dost not weep.

LADY BLANCHE.

I do !

LADY ANNE.

You are in love !

LADY BLANCHE.

To be sure I am. O ! never women more
Deceived themselves than we did ! To believe
It rested with ourselves to love or not ;
As we at once could have and lack a heart ;
As though we were not made of flesh and blood ;
As though we were not women—women—skiffs
Sure to be toss'd by passion as by waves
The barque that 's launch'd into the open sea !
Why don't you weep ?—you would for sympathy,
Did you but love as I do.

LADY ANNE.

Love as you do !

The loves of twenty women would not make
The heap of mine.

LADY BLANCHE.

And mine among the number ?
Now look you, Anne, the moiety of my love
Would make your heap.

LADY ANNE.

Would make my heap ? Its tithe
Would beat your moiety !

LADY BLANCHE.

The measure of it ?

LADY ANNE.

The earth !

LADY BLANCHE.

I'll give thee in the sun and moon !
My love holds measure with the universe !
That mocketh bounds.

LADY ANNE.

Ne'er woman loved as I do.

LADY BLANCHE.

Ne'er woman loved at all, compared to me !
In me the passion, Anne, is nature ! what
I feel you only have a notion of.
I love by heart ; you only, Anne, by rote !
Peace, I will have it so !—Upon my life
We are a pair of most renown'd old maids !

Enter JANE.

JANE.

So please you, madam, have I now your leave ?

LADY ANNE.

Leave !—Whither go you ?—O, I had forgot.
I gave her leave to spend the afternoon
With Charlotte, your fair maid.

LADY BLANCHE.

She gives a treat
To-day. She begg'd of me a room or two ;
I bad her take the freedom of the house,
And with her friends keep holiday, for she
My foster-sister is, as well as maid !

LADY ANNE.

Is 't not a wedding, Jane ?

JANE.

I am bound, my lady,
To secrecy.

LADY ANNE.

Pshaw ! secrecy to me ?

JANE.

It is a wedding.

LADY ANNE.

And whom marries she ?

JANE.

They tell me Colonel Blount.

LADY BLANCHE.

They slander him !

It is impossible !

LADY ANNE.

You have your leave !

Go, Jane !

[JANE goes out.]

LADY BLANCHE (*calling after JANE*).

But go not forth—wait in the ante-room
For me ! Behoves I further question her !

LADY ANNE.

Would you betray yourself ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Betray myself !—

I have betray'd myself—I am betray'd
By him, by you,—but most of all myself!—
There's no accounting for the tastes of men!—
I'll see this wedding!

LADY ANNE.

Wherefore?

LADY BLANCHE.

Know I not!—
To stop the banns!

LADY ANNE.

Play rival to thy maid?

LADY BLANCHE.

The maid is betters to the mistress now!
I must be present at these nuptials, Anne!
I think it cannot be as she reports!
And yet, again, I doubt, and fear it is!
If so, I'll see him give away his hand,
And to escape detection from the rest,
Attire me as the maid he knew me first—
The yeoman's daughter whom he saw and loved
Follow me, Anne, and see how it will end.

LADY ANNE.

What profit can it bring thee, proves it he?

LADY BLANCHE.

I know not what! I scarce know what I do
I have an aim, yet know not what it is!
I shall expect you, Anne.—Be sure you come!
Anne, turns it out, as much I fear it will,
You'll have to answer for't.

LADY ANNE.

For what, dear Blanche?

LADY BLANCHE.

That I should love, and die a lost old maid.

[LADY BLANCHE *goes out*.]

LADY ANNE.

Full of her own predicament, she casts
No thought on mine. What will become of me,
Returns not fair Sir Philip to the charge,
Dishearten'd by repulse, which I confess
I gave him more in show than earnestness?
That's he!—I know his step!—Come in, Sir Philip!

Enter SIR PHILIP.

SIR PHILIP.

I have made bold to call.

LADY ANNE.

I see you have call'd;
I do not see you have made bold!

SIR PHILIP.

I came
To ask your pardon.

LADY ANNE.

O!—for yesterday.
Yes; I was angry!—You surprised me so!
It was not *what* you did, but *how* you did it.
And then my maid to see it!—What knew she
How you intended it? Such things—you know
I view them philosophically—go
For what they are meant for. There is a father's kiss,
A brother's kiss, a friend's kiss—and a kiss—
Of another kind.—You guess the kind I mean—
Not like the kiss you gave me yesterday.

SIR PHILIP.

I am not sure of that.—Nay I'll be honest!

LADY ANNE.

Do so, Sir Philip! Honesty is a grace
That makes amends for worlds of awkward things.

SIR PHILIP.

With safety would I might be honest still.

LADY ANNE.

You cannot tell, you know, unless you try!

SIR PHILIP.

Trying, perhaps I fail.

LADY ANNE.

Perhaps succeed.

But trying not, be sure you won't succeed.

SIR PHILIP.

Dear Lady Anne, I feel—I know not what.

LADY ANNE.

I cannot know unless you tell me what.

How do you feel?

SIR PHILIP.

Most strangely.

LADY ANNE.

And how long?

SIR PHILIP.

Why ever since I came to school to you.

I am smitten, Lady Anne.

LADY ANNE.

What mean you, sir?

Smitten by me? I have not got the plague!

I don't feel ill!—Can I be ailing, sir?

Do you think me ill?—Do you know anything

About the pulse? Feel mine! How am I?

SIR PHILIP.

Nay,

Allow me time to tell.

LADY ANNE.

O! take your time!

SIR PHILIP.

A most sweet hand you have, dear Lady Anne.
Here is a palm, and here are fingers too!

LADY ANNE.

I hope there are.

SIR PHILIP.

And joints.

LADY ANNE.

Who has not palms,
Fingers, and joints, Sir Philip, that has hands?

SIR PHILIP.

But hands that have all these are not the same!
Some will repel, and some attract the touch;
Some will delight, and some offend the eye.
This palm hath softness, which the eider-down
Were richer if it knew! Those tapering fingers
Are in their dazzling whiteness, and their shape,
Rays far more precious than e'er crown'd a star,
That penetrate the heart with light and warmth
In which the sun is poor!—and here are joints
That mock the cheek with dimples—play on smiles—
As hinges could be fashion'd of such things!
O there's a world of riches in a hand!
Treasures that count with feeling, thought, and sense,
And most of all—in this one.

LADY ANNE.

Pray, Sir Philip,
How is my pulse?

SIR PHILIP.

I cannot find your pulse—Can't tell the pulse—
Know nothing of the pulse.—You are quite well;
But I am very ill, dear Lady Anne.

LADY ANNE.

Indeed ! Sir Philip. Let me try my skill !—
The hand keeps steady while we feel the pulse—
No signs of ailment here.

SIR PHILIP.

No fever ?

LADY ANNE.

No :
The even-plodding beat of sober health !
And yet thou mayst be ill.—Art rheumatic ?

SIR PHILIP.

No:

LADY ANNE.

Art thou subject to the quinsey ?

SIR PHILIP.

No.

LADY ANNE.

Feel'st rigors now and then—the certain signs
Of brooding mischief ?

SIR PHILIP.

No.

LADY ANNE.

Hadst ever threat'ning
Of a lock'd jaw ?

SIR PHILIP.

No !

LADY ANNE.

Hast thou got a head-ache ?

SIR PHILIP.

No !

LADY ANNE.

If thou'rt ill, it must be somewhere ! How
Feel'st thou about the region of the heart ?

SIR PHILIP.

'Tis there, dear Lady Anne ; 'tis there !

What's there ?
LADY ANNE.

My illness !
SIR PHILIP.

What, suspect you, is it ?
LADY ANNE.

Love !
SIR PHILIP.

LADY ANNE.
A dunce !—I might have known it all along !—
Of course !—you are in love with Lady Blanche !

SIR PHILIP.
Nay, Lady Anne, I am in love with you !

LADY ANNE.
In love with me ! Why, what can I have done
To make you so ?

SIR PHILIP.
Nothing with that intent,
But everything must work to such an end !
Made me—from nothing—which I was,—a man !
Almost a man—your work not yet complete,
But you will crown it, will you marry me.

LADY ANNE.
Sir Philip, we shall speak another time.

SIR PHILIP.
That other time will find another yet !
No time like the present, when the cause is good,
And the heart cheerily runs along with it !

LADY ANNE.
Give me a day !

SIR PHILIP.
What ! with such friends as these
To back me now ?

LADY ANNE.

What friends?

SIR PHILIP.

Your blushes, lady,
You fain would hide, but cannot!—and your eyes,
O'er which you drop those snowy veils, their lids,
To hide what they would tell—yet thus betray;
And your whole form shrinking with consciousness,
Which breathes such fears as fan the lover's hopes.
Dear Lady Anne—

LADY ANNE.

Sir Philip, here I am,
And judge me as a man of honour would
The maid he truly loves, and not in vain!
There—you have ta'en possession!—Loose me now,
And meet me presently at Lady Blanche's,
Whither by friendship am I summon'd straight!
And should obey, since love's behest is done.
[They go out severally.]

SCENE THE LAST.

*A Room in LADY BLANCHE'S.**Enter JOHN.*

JOHN.

The knot is tied!—I am a married man,
And now I wish myself a single one!
Great people do not sort with me, their ways
Are so uncommon! 'Tis a serious thing
To marry! There throughout the ceremony

Sir Philip stood, with handkerchief to mouth,
Stifling his laughter ; opposite, his friends,
Lords John and Stephen, lords although they be,
Tittering outright, and nudging one another.
Be this the mode with men of quality,
I know, in those beneath them, it would pass
For monstrously bad breeding ! But the worst
Is yet to come !—The bride herself did laugh—
Laugh till her sides shook.—Yea, and I prepared
With a most lovely kerchief for the tears
I thought she would be drown'd in.—'Pon my life,
Great folks are no great things—but I am married !

ROBERT (*entering, handkerchief to mouth*).

What !—Colonel Blount alone !—Why, where's your bride ?
Gone to recruit her spirits, I suppose,
After the ceremony ! 'Twas a most
Affecting one !

JOHN.

You found it so.

ROBERT.

I did.
How near akin are moods most opposite !
I vow there 's not a pin's point difference
'Twixt tears and laughter.—Nay, 'tis known to all
Grief laughs as oft as weeps.

JOHN.

You mean it falls
Into hystericks.

ROBERT.

As I nearly did
To-day.

JOHN.

No !

ROBERT.

Yes, as I 'm a baronet !
Upon my life !—O, Colonel Blount, how well
You play'd the bridegroom !—so impressively.
I have seen moving things, but ne'er was moved
Before to-day ! 'Twas well the clergyman
Was hackney'd in the ceremony, else
He never had got through with it !

JOHN.

Say you so ?
This is another version of the story !
And did I play the bridegroom movingly ?

ROBERT.

The bride, methinks, might satisfy you there.
I am sure I saw her tremble !

JOHN.

She did shake !

ROBERT.

Indeed ? 'Twas well she did not quite go off.

JOHN.

I thought 'twas all with mirth.

ROBERT.

Mirth, Colonel Blount !
I wish you could have seen and heard yourself !
You look'd and spoke !

JOHN.

How did I speak and look ?
Pathetically ?

ROBERT.

Spare me, gentle sir,
I lack your constancy !

JOHN.

My constancy !

It is my forte !—If there is one thing, sir,
Wherein, among the things that I excel in,

I do surpass myself, I may aver

It is my constancy. I see it now !

I have a way of speaking serious things,

And doing them, quite of my own !—The bride !

Enter CHARLOTTE, supported by JACOB and STEPHEN.

Permit me, noble friends ;—how does my wife ?

CHARLOTTE.

A little better !

JOHN.

Cruel that I was !

The ceremony was too much for you !

And 'twas my fault ! If I had dream'd of it,

I should have skipp'd my share, or rhymed it o'er.

CHARLOTTE.

I ne'er heard sermon so affected me,

And I have heard all kinds—charity ones,

And funeral ones—I may have wept at some,

But never was o'erpower'd until to-day !

JOHN.

Nay, think of it no more.

CHARLOTTE.

Each syllable spoke volumes to me.

JOHN.

You distress me, love !

CHARLOTTE.

I must give vent to what I feel, or drop !

JOHN.

Nay then, dear love, speak on.

CHARLOTTE.

You certainly
Were destined for the church.

JOHN.

O no !

CHARLOTTE.

You were !

JOHN.

Upon my honour, love, I tell thee no !

CHARLOTTE.

The gown and surplice little know their loss !
But stop ! said I the church ?—I meant the stage,
For there they have the art superlative
Of moving hearts, beleaguering them so,
Perforce they yield, and to the captors pay
Tribute incontinent of sighs and tears !

JOHN.

I do suspect the stage had been my forte !

CHARLOTTE.

What a tragedian, husband, had you made !

JOHN.

I think I had !

CHARLOTTE.

Were it a killing part,
No need of dagger, poison'd chalice, cord !
Your looks had slain without them.

JOHN.

I believe
The stage has lost a murderer in me !
I won't regret it, though ; come, lady wife,
We now must feast, so let me lead thee home !

PETER (*entering*).

One Master Blount inquires for you below,
A dame along with him who seems his wife.

JOHN (*aside*).

My father and my mother!—Bid them hie
At noon to-morrow to the place they know
On Ludgate-hill.—I cannot see them here.

[PETER *goes out*.

CHARLOTTE.

Who wants to see you, husband?

JOHN.

Nobody.
A friend of such a sort as one may have
And know not; one may lose and never miss.

PETER (*re-entering*).

He is angry at your answer—there he stands
And will not quit the door.

JOHN.

Most shocking breeding;
Repeat my answer, sir, I cannot see him.

COLONEL BLOUNT (*bursting in, followed by MASTER
and MISTRESS BLOUNT. SIR PHILIP BRILLIANT
and LADY ANNE, who joins LADY BLANCHE, enter-
ing from another part of the chamber*).

Where is my brother?—may I call him so,
Who keeps his reverend parents at the door!
What means this, John—how comes it? What!—Art thou
My elder brother, and instruct'st me thus?
Endurest thou the roof that is too proud
To shelter these most loved and sacred heads?
Spurn'st not the threshold that admits thy feet,
And these most hallow'd ones forbids to pass?
Hold'st commerce with the host that takes thee in,
And those thou ow'st thy being to shuts out?
For surely host, roof, threshold are to blame;

For sacrilege 'gainst nature like to this,
And not the man with whom I share one blood.

JOHN.

There are times, brother, and occasions.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

None

For doing that which damns the precious soul ;
And Heaven hath set our parents next itself
For piety, whose slight entaileth death !
Passing along with these most noble friends,
I saw our sire and mother at the door ;
Paid them my duty ; found they had traced thee hither,
Succeeding on the search that baffled me ;
Learn'd the proud message thou hadst sent them down ;
And gave 't reception, as became their son !
Up to them, brother ! no excuses make
For what admits of none ; but own thy fault,
And ask for pardon.

MISTRESS BLOUNT.

Husband, tell me now,
Is not a mother far the likeliest
To know her own son ? Where is now thy John ?
But look upon my Thomas ! Gentleman
Or tradesman, he is the same !—would own thee, though
Thou still hadst apron on !—would smile at me,
Call'd I him now " Good Thomas !—Honest lad !—
Kind boy ! " as, when he was thy 'prentice, John,
I used to do ; and he did like to hear,
And now, I will be bound, would like as well.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

O mother, there are strains in boyhood heard,

As men that thrill us, as none other can !
But come, forgive my brother.

LADY ANNE (*coming forward*).

Blanche, a thought
Has struck me. Show thyself. Let him behold
The yeoman's maid again.—He is riveted !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

She is found.

LADY ANNE (*aside*).

My guess was right !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

It must be she !
The simple silent maid, in humble guise,
Whose beauty unpretending, without aid,
Made captive of me ! Whom, although I left
I follow'd still—from whom that gap, they say,
Oblivion doth fill up—fatal to love—
Absence—could ne'er divide me, but became
A bed in which the stream of memory ran,
And gather'd flood in flowing.—Art not she ?
O turn to me !—O let me see thy face,
The radiant impress of consummate woman,
Superlative from nature's hand alone,
Who, jealous of her master work, refused
Prosperity and rank a share in thee,
And made thee daughter, rare, of lowliness !
Will you not turn ?

LADY BLANCHE.

Yes, will you guarantee
All risk thereby I run.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I do !

LADY BLANCHE.

Behold !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

The yeoman's maid ! were empress of the earth,
Did rank by beauty go !

LADY BLANCHE.

Know'st thou me not ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Know I thee not ? Ay—by these eyes that see thee,
These ears that hear thee, and, beyond e'en these,
The heart that feasts on what they see and hear.

LADY BLANCHE.

Thou know'st me not ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Art not the yeoman's maid ?

LADY BLANCHE.

I am, but was not she.—She was a sprite,
My wayward fancy for illusion raised,
Now marvellously turn'd to flesh and blood,
Through talisman of thy most noble worth !
None see you here beside the yeoman's maid ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

None.

LADY BLANCHE.

Let me doff the hood I still kept on.
How say you now, sir ?

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Nothing do I see,
Except the yeoman's maid. I see the hood
Still in your modest coif and simple cloak.

LADY BLANCHE.

There then.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

The Countess.

LADY BLANCHE.

No.—The yeoman's maid.
Spare what I was, for what I have become,
If what I have become, content thee, take me !
Or take me not, none other e'er shall own me !
Now do I see how wealth and rank themselves,
Estranging nature from simplicity,
May root her graces up, and in their stead
Plant blemishes ;—but I have wider swerv'd,
Misled by vanity and pride of sway,
Never suspecting that to hold one heart,
Outwent the boast of winning thousand ones—
A lesson taught by you, and learn'd for life !

COLONEL BLOUNT.

How will the mood the selfsame features change !
E'en as the air will change the self-same cheek !
Now, I behold again the maid I loved,
Still love—had loved, for ever, though unfound.
Take thee ? I do !—In all humility,
And thankfulness, and love, I take thee, lady !

CHARLOTTE (*advancing with her party*).My mistress (*to ROBERT*).

ROBERT.

Yes ; and there's my master ! Come !
Let's steal away. Come ! Stephen ! Jacob !

STEPHEN *and* JACOB.

Well ?

ROBERT.

To keep our titles, best we take them hence !
Nay, noble friends, tarry awhile, I pray :

JOHN.

My father, mother, and my brother, there,
And those good friends, I question not, will join
My feast in honour of our nuptials with
The Countess Lady Blanche.

CHARLOTTE (*running up to JOHN, and placing her hand before
his mouth*).

Stop, Colonel Blount.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

I answer to that name.

CHARLOTTE.

No, sir! I mean
This gentleman.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

Brother! How were you made
A Colonel?

JOHN.

How was I made a Colonel?—by
Rapid promotion.

SIR PHILIP.

Robert, this is you.

ROBERT.

I own 'twas I that dubb'd him Colonel, sir,
But with his own good-will.

JOHN.

Wife, how is this?

CHARLOTTE.

Dear husband, pardon me,
I am not the Countess, but her lady's-maid.

JOHN.

I'll be divorced.

CHARLOTTE.

You must be married first.
You have been cheated, sir, but innocently,
At cost alone of your credulity.
Our wedding and our titles were the same,—
A play to make you wise, and pass the hour.

COLONEL BLOUNT.

John, take it in good part.

JOHN.

I will do so,
Brother, I am a man to bear a jest.
If there is one thing I am master in
Beyond another, brother, it is that.

LADY BLANCHE.

Anne !

LADY ANNE.

Blanche (*coming down*) ?

LADY BLANCHE.

A man is something after all !

LADY ANNE.

Yes, with our help—I made one of Sir Philip.

LADY BLANCHE.

Nay, Anne, my eyes are open'd. We require
Men's help as well—except for Colonel Blount
I ne'er had been a woman. Much I question
If you yourself are past improving by them.

LADY ANNE.

Oh, Blanche !

LADY BLANCHE.

Oh, Anne ! the older, still the wiser.

And won't I titter when you say "obey"
Before the parson! Will you say it?

LADY ANNE.

Yes.

LADY BLANCHE.

And "love" and "honour" too?

LADY ANNE.

I will!—wont you?

LADY BLANCHE.

Devoutly, Anne, as e'er I said my prayers.
But, Anne, the pass we're come to! Don't you know?
How shall we answer to old maids for this?

LADY ANNE.

Lay heads together, and concoct a speech.
Proceed you.

LADY BLANCHE.

Nay, I never open'd school,
On which account take you precedence, Anne.
I'll help you to the first word—"Ladies!"—well?

LADY ANNE.

Ladies—I'll lay the fault upon the men (*to BLANCHE*).

LADY BLANCHE (*aside*).

They lay the fault first who are most to blame.

LADY ANNE.

But for the men, we had been still old maids.
Accept of our regrets.

LADY BLANCHE.

Nay, Anne, tell truth—
We don't regret at all! Let me go on,
I'll make a grace of our defection, Anne.—
Ladies, applaud us martyrs in the cause,

For which, contending with more zeal than heed,
We were ta'en captive by the common foe.
Profit by our example, don't despise
An enemy though slight, and if you fail
As we have done, endure it with good grace.
Believe you put on wreaths in wedlock's chains,
And turn with loving faith the links to flowers,
Of which the poorest beggars liberty.

THE END.

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